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**HANDBOOK**  
**of**  
**BUSINESS LETTERS**



**BY THE SAME AUTHOR**

**THIS WAY UP**

**SMOOTH SAILING LETTERS**

**REAL ESTATE SALESMAN'S HANDBOOK**

**HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS**

**EFFECTIVE CREDIT AND COLLECTION LETTERS**

**FUNDAMENTALS OF REAL ESTATE PRACTICE (CO-AUTHOR)**



# **HANDBOOK of BUSINESS LETTERS**

**by  
L. E. FRAILEY**

**VOLUME I  
(Sections 1-7)**

**PRENTICE-HALL, Inc.  
Englewood Cliffs, N. J.**



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# TO THE READER

Let's talk five minutes about this Handbook!

Twenty-five years ago, I was just as much interested in letters, and what they could be made to do for business, as I am now. Even then I dreamed of one complete book which would give any executive and his secretary a simple, easy-to-read explanation of common-sense principles, and all the reference data needed to settle any questionable point with respect to letter mechanics.

The book I pictured would be concise and practical, but long enough to cover every kind of business correspondence; it would be helpful to sales managers, credit men, personnel directors, chief executives, secretarial workers, and all the clerks who had to "talk on paper" or "take a letter." I wanted very much to write it then, but I realized that first must come years of experience and study, of actual testing for results . . . the accumulation of a great mass of case material. To be of any real value, the writing of such a book would take a long, long time.

Like Topsy, the book just had to *grow*.

Nevertheless, knowing that someday I meant to do the job, I began away back then to keep my eyes open for anything that might help to make the various sections of this Handbook interesting and valuable. Fortunately, all through these years it has been my privilege to know many business executives, to work with many companies, and to gain a down-to-earth view of letter uses and problems. You see, I was *exposed* in a very practical way to the things that had to be known if my book were to become a reality.

Often, it has seemed that Providence was bringing me in contact with the people who could—and did—supply the practical, tested material which you will find on these pages. From business men and women who had to endure my lectures, from those enrolled in the Business Letter Clinics conducted in many cities, from workers in the companies where I reviewed correspondence, from subscribers to the Dartnell Letter Service, from students in my classes at Northwestern University, from the letter-experts with whom I became



pleasantly acquainted . . . from all these and many other sources, a flood of letter-contributions came my way. Thus, "Topsy" had many friends—she gained weight steadily.

The above explains why I do not regard myself as the sole author of this *Handbook of Business Letters*. On the contrary, thousands of generous business friends have helped to make it possible, and to them you and I owe a little bow of appreciation. They have helped to present you with information and suggestions based on practice, not theory. The things talked about are not what I *think* or *assume* about business letters; they represent the actual *experience* of many others like yourself who are constantly trying to make their letters do the best possible job.

The recorded results of experience . . . this I believe to be the only safe guide for one who dares to write a business book. Hence, I would not presume to talk to you about sales unless I myself had been a salesman; or about sales letters unless I myself had written successful sales letters. I would not presume to talk about credit problems unless I myself had wet my feet in trying to solve them. What right would I have to tell you, the head of a company, how to conduct a Better Letter Program unless I had practiced what I preached?

Yes, this is a practical book. There is nothing in it which will not hold water. For a quarter of a century I have been finding out why some letters pull and others flop. If that sounds like blowing my own horn, it is not so intended. It is simply that I have discovered many FACTS that you need to know about business letters, and you'll find them all in this volume.

The majority of the letters, the bulletins and opinions were sent to me with permission to use them as I pleased. For others, permission was secured during the book's preparation. There are a few cases, however, where it has not been possible to identify the writer of the letter, or the company from which it originated. This is regrettable, but I did not believe that any business person would want a letter omitted which might help others to improve their dictation. Certainly, I have tried hard to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's due, and I ask the indulgence of anyone who has been inadvertently overlooked.

One thing more. Please do not let the size of this *Handbook* disturb you. It could not have been any shorter and have done a *complete* job for you. At least, I have endeavored not to let any part of it become too academic or tiresome. As you may know from my other books about business letters, my language is that of the everyday man. I believe with all my heart in short words, short sentences . . . in just *talking* in your letters as you do in



conversation. That's the only way I know how to write, and I'll have to stick to it.

It is a real compliment that you want to read this Handbook. If by chance our paths should ever cross, I want you to come up and let me meet you personally. Until then, the sunshine of life to you . . . and much success with your letters.



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## SECTION

# I

## HOW LETTERS SERVE BUSINESS

### *1. Why Letters Must Be Used*

*To take the place of personal contacts.* Why should anyone complain about the letters he is forced to write in business? These fast-moving messengers who wear the three-cent armband do a job which no individual could do for himself. You pay what it takes to get them into the mail box, and that is all. They get no salary, and turn in no expense account.

If you are a credit manager, by using letters you can talk to a hundred, a thousand, customers who owe your company money—on the same day, and without leaving your desk.— If you are a sales manager, you can dictate one interesting form letter that will tell all your distributors about a new product—just the same as if you appeared personally on the same day in their stores. Letters conserve your time, and multiply your efforts, by taking the place of personal contacts. Letters are a great boon to business. They help to get things done.

*More necessary as business expands.* The bigger the company, the wider the area which it serves, the greater is the need for letters. The man who operates a neighborhood shoe-store may be able to handle almost everything personally, although he could use sales letters to develop new customers. But the owner of a large chain of shoe-stores, operating in various cities and states, could hardly get along without some device to substitute for personal contacts. Oh, he might depend entirely on telegrams and telephone calls, which have their place in the sun, but he couldn't long compete with others on such a wasteful basis. Yes, we must admit that letters more than any other part of business help to make possible growth and expansion. Letters conquer space. Letters make one minute do the work of many. Letters deserve more respect than they have had in business.

*Not like the early days.* There was a time, of course, and not too far back, when letters were not so necessary or important. Remember how Abe Lincoln, the postmaster, carried what letters he



received in his hatband? That was the story we were told in grade-school. There is no reason to doubt it. But those were the days of the small stores—the cobbler, the grocer, the tailor, doing business only in their own restricted areas—each serving a limited number of people who could come or send someone else for what they wanted.

Getting a letter in those days was an exciting event. It didn't matter particularly how the letter was written. It was passed around, and always got attention. The only rule that seemed to prevail for letter-writing in those days was that it should be written in the driest possible manner, and in a language so stiff and formal that the true personality of the writer was completely hidden. Unfortunately, that rule was never abolished, and even now there are some who foolishly cling to it.

The awareness of change—the appreciation of up-to-date ways of doing business—are most important to anyone who aspires to become a successful letter-writer. We gain nothing by imitating the past. Like living customs and working conditions, the standards for a business letter have changed for the better. Why should any business man who drives a modern automobile, tunes in to a European radio program, or takes a plane from New York to California, use the same style for writing a letter as did his great-grandfather?

*Rules for employees in 1854.* If you need any evidence of the changes that have taken place in business since the middle of the last century, the following rules written in 1854 for the employees of a store which has now become one of the biggest and best known in our nation should be most illuminating. These rules were found in an old ledger. How would you like to abide by them on your present job?

Store must be opened promptly at 6 a.m. and remain open until 9 p.m. the year around.

Pens must be made; doors and windows opened; a pail of water, and a scuttle of coal must be brought in by each clerk, before breakfast if there is time to do so, and attend to customers who call.

Store must not be opened on the Sabbath Day unless absolutely necessary and then only for a few minutes.

Any employee who is in the habit of smoking Spanish cigars, getting shaved at a barber shop, going to dances and other such places of amusement, will most surely give his employer reason to be suspicious of his integrity and all around honesty.

Each employee must pay not less than \$5.00 per year to the church and must attend Sunday School every Sunday.



Men employees are given one evening a week for courting purposes, and two if they go to prayer meeting regularly.

After work in the store, leisure time must be spent in reading good literature.

Yes, those were "the good old days" we hear acclaimed so often—days when letters were used sparingly in business. But these are *modern* times. Many letters to write! Much to learn about **HOW** to write them.

## 2. *The Major Uses of Letters*

*To handle routine matters.* A large part of the correspondence which passes back and forth in business is routine in nature. Letters of this type are usually short, and nobody expects them to be especially interesting or persuasive. In other words, routine letters are not seeking to influence human behavior, as would one to a salesman whose orders have fallen off, or as would another to a customer who has neglected too long the payment of a bill. There is no problem involved in the dictating of a routine letter, and for that reason the job is comparatively easy. For example, it requires no special skill to confirm an order. That is a routine matter which can be handled courteously in a few words. But if you must decline the order, and the customer is likely to be angry about it, then the letter situation is a problem far above routine level, and great skill is required to write the letter which will say "no" and still retain the goodwill of the customer.

The very simplicity of the job in dashing out a batch of routine letters also tends to set up a trap into which the writer easily may fall. The letters are too curt—too cold. They become contacts without a smile. They *could* help to win or hold goodwill, but they *don't*.

This tendency to serve the meat without seasoning can represent a great loss to the company where it prevails. Since every friendly contact helps to maintain the right relationship between the company and the public it must serve to stay in business, why should any chance, no matter how small, to add fuel to the fire be disregarded? The letter-writer most valuable to his company is the person who makes *every* letter, routine or otherwise, a friendly, human message seasoned with a genuine will to serve. No letter can be considered so unimportant as to justify an indifferent job.

*To sell products and services.* If any one type of letter were to be selected as most valuable in business, the *sales letter* probably would get the nod. Certainly, with the possible exception of some adjust-



ment letters, it is the most difficult to write. As the name obviously implies, the object of the sales letter is to *sell*. If, for example, the letter is mailed to one thousand customers or prospects, its merit can be measured by the percentage of favorable replies.

Too many sales managers and executives of higher station still seem unaware of the fact that certain specific principles must be applied in the construction of a good sales letter, and that the percentage of "pull" will invariably depend on the writer's understanding of those principles, plus his ability to put them to work. The successful sales letter is neither the result of genius nor an act of Providence. There are *skills to master*, as will be explained later in this Handbook.

Since sales letters are used to develop orders, and thus have direct relation to profit, it must be the obligation of the sales manager, and even of the president, to make sure they are prepared in the way most likely to be effective. Any ignorance with respect to sales letter construction—any haste or carelessness in doing the job—will mean orders *lost* that might have been *gained*, and thus, a direct waste of possible profit dollars.

There are, of course, as shown in Sections 8 and 9, numerous kinds of sales letters—from those that come out at the end and ask for the order, down to the more subtle ones that break ice for future business. In every case, you are writing to a human being, seeking to impel a certain reaction, whether it be to sign and return the enclosed order-blank, or merely to make him say, "I like the way this fellow writes to me—he must work for a good company."

Although the number of sales letters mailed every year is truly enormous, a great many more could still be used to increase business. The smaller merchants, and some of the larger ones, too, usually neglect this opportunity to keep people informed about the goods they have in stock. Except for the rare announcement of a bargain-sale, or of some special event such as moving to new quarters, you seldom get letters from the retailers serving your neighborhood. And yet, if used intelligently, sales letters will increase business for the average local merchant. This has been proved in many localities—in Reading, Pennsylvania, for example, where Norman Focht has written many successful sales letters for retailers, and in Binghamton, New York, where Jules Livingston has performed a similar service.

*To establish credit and collect money.* Very few companies keep collectors in the field, and it is not generally considered wise to place any collection burden on the shoulders of salesmen. Hence, a very large percentage of credit and collection problems are solved by the use of letters. On rare occasions, when a large amount of money is



involved, the credit manager or an associate may seek a personal interview, but the great bulk of the work necessary to establish credit ratings, to refuse special terms or privileges, and to collect slow accounts, is handled by correspondence.

Here again, a handicap exists for many credit men because they disregard tested principles which would make their letters more effective. The best credit men are both goodwill builders and money collectors. They work with the sales department and often find the way to place a sales "twist" in a letter about some credit situation. They are students of psychology, and expert letter-craftsmen. From the letter-courses sponsored by their National Association, credit men in various cities have gained a fair concept of the principles of letter carpentry, and we are seeing less and less of old time collection methods where the credit man started by calling the wayward customer a deadbeat, and then "worked up."

In the sections of the Handbook devoted to Credit and Collections, you will find many fine letters to prove that credit men in general are holding their own in comparison with those in other fields of business; but there are still too many money-collectors who believe, as of old, that a collection letter which sizzles with abuse is better than one which reasons man-to-man with the customer.

*To adjust complaints and misunderstandings.* Even in the best-managed company, where the customer relations policy is "fair-play and good manners," it is impossible to avoid an occasional tangle in the threads of business. No matter where the fault may rest, the company with long-pull vision will do everything possible to satisfy the customer. If the adjustment cannot be in the nature of a "yes," at least the effort is made to save face for the customer by making the "no" as gentle and painless as the adjustment manager can devise. The art of being able to smooth the ruffled feathers of a customer, of changing a frown to a smile, is one that seems better adapted to letters than to personal contacts. This, to be sure, is only a general statement because there are exceptional cases where no letter could do the job.

The advantage of the letter adjustment over the personal one is that the writer can very carefully state his case from start to finish without the danger of an interruption which may take the argument off on a tangent, result in heated words back and forth, and conclude with the customer even more disturbed than before. The letter affords a better chance to place all the cards face-up on the table, and if the facts are stated in a friendly game fashion, it is often surprising how neatly and completely the meeting of two minds can be reached. This job is not done so easily in a personal conversation.



Thus, we see that adjustments by letter can not only save a lot of time, but can also tend to eliminate the bickering which so often ends in the losing of the customer's goodwill. The aim, of course, is to assign the responsibility of handling complaints to a man of good judgment who has the knack of writing friendly letters. Irrespective of whether he gives all, gives a part, or gives not at all, his letter still carries a tone of consideration for the customer's point of view, and a sincere appreciation of his business.

*To win and hold goodwill.* Naturally, it might be asked, "Why mention only goodwill letters as apart from all the other types? Isn't that one of the objectives in *any* business letter?" Quite true. Just as in one sense every employee of a company is a member of the sales department, so in the same way every letter should be a messenger of goodwill. But there are also those letters in business which are written for *no other purpose* than to make the customer feel he is important to the company and that a human relationship exists just as one man may be the friend of another. Such a letter is nothing more than the waving of a hand to someone across the street, and a "Hello, there! How are you doing? We are interested in you and your business."

You could call these goodwill builders "unnecessary letters," and that's what they are if you think of business as a cold and formal thing in which there is no place or time for those little courtesies which help to make it warm and personal. Many executives hold a different opinion, however. They realize that competition is keen and that companies other than their own are often shooting for their customers. They think the time and effort well spent in sowing seeds of goodwill which may help to keep old customers in the fold and may round up some new ones.

In Section 11 of this Handbook, you will find many of these "unnecessary" goodwill letters—messages of appreciation, of congratulation, of condolence—and you may judge for yourself how *you* would react to them. Certainly, if written at all, they must originate in a friendly company where the spirit of service is strong and genuine.

Whether or not you believe these goodwill letters are worth while, the fact remains that many of our leading companies use them to continue building their businesses. Investigate the sales progress of any company committed to a letter-program for building customer goodwill, and you will surely find it a step in front of its competitors.



### 3. *Letters as Part of Public Relations*

*Not as pigs are pigs.* Perhaps because it is one of the newer skills developed for use in business, there are still many executives, and others of the rank and file, who think a letter is a letter as a pig is a pig. Business men who realize that the preparation of a good sales letter is just as exacting as the preparation of a good sales talk are forced to endure a period of transition, during which the importance of letters, and the need of *trained* writers, must overcome the idea held by many other executives that their own letters are good because they have been writing them for years.

This condition is both confusing and lamentable. You see companies willing to spend large sums of money on intensive training programs for salesmen but reluctant to spend a dime to improve letters. Yet the same customers and prospects, day in and day out, are contacted by both the salesmen and the letter-writers, and often with the same objectives. This, of course, is both costly and destructive to business. Often the good accomplished by the highly trained salesman is nullified by a letter-writer who has had no training at all. The salesman works hard to get a new customer for the company. A correspondent comes along with a tactless letter, and the customer is lost. Examples like these are countless, and they all result from the idea that a personal contact is different from one made by letter. That's all nonsense; words written are just as important as words spoken.

A letter is *not* a letter as a pig is a pig. Writing a letter, unless it be of the lowest routine variety, is a psychological process. It involves the mastery of principles which are known and tested. When those principles are applied, success follows. The trained letter-writer is an asset to his company. The man who scorns the training and thinks he knows it all without investigation of the facts is just as much a liability.

*One man talking to another.* Aside from the principles that must be understood, is the fact that a letter—a *good* letter—reflects the personality of the writer, which needless to say should be pleasing to the reader. In a good letter, *one man talks to another*. The reader must be made to forget that he is *reading* a letter. Instead, the writer has traveled on a piece of paper to *talk* to him—in exactly the same way that he would if he had appeared in person.

A letter is a personal contact. Never forget that. Why should it be anything else? There's a customer in California whose account is lagging. You can't go that far to talk about it, but you can call your secretary, or pick up your Dictaphone, and ask him in a friendly way for a check. You can put the same smile in the



words on paper that you would put in your voice if the customer were there with you in the same room.

There are many angles to the construction of various types of business letters, and it takes time and practice to master them. If your own letters have been dry and commonplace, you can add new life and vitality to the next batch by just trying to *talk* to the folks who are going to read what you have to say. Make them see your personality between the lines.

*Your readers are human beings.* After all, these folks—your readers—are not just *names*. They are *people*. They walk, talk, sleep, eat, gossip, worship, love, hate—just as you do.

If mailing lists could come to life,  
And march before our eyes,  
I think a lot of writers would  
Be very much surprised . . .  
To learn that every single name  
Is human like himself,  
And just as keen about his game,  
His money, and his health.

I think the name would much resent  
The thought that every message sent  
Was not addressed to home or store—  
But to a stencil in a drawer.\*

Business consists of a multitude of human contacts—the clashing of opinions, the unity of desires—and making the sum total pleasant is the object of what we call “Public Relations.” If the nature of these contacts determines the degree of goodwill earned and held by your company, then how can letters be ignored? Letters are part of public relations, and that means *human* relations. Two human beings with their heads together—you and your reader—that’s all a letter is. At least, all it *should* be.

“The most effective letters,” says a bulletin issued by the Household Finance Corporation, “are frank statements—messages from real people to other real people. They should be easy to read and easy to understand. They must be friendly and courteous. The often-stressed point that business letters should develop goodwill is not ‘bunkem’ but a principle of vital significance. Every letter involves a problem, and every problem has at least two sides: the customer’s point of view, and that of the writer. It sometimes seems that these are opposed to each other, yet they usually are in harmony, because good business transactions are mutually profitable to the parties involved.”

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\* Author unknown.



*What L. A. Downs thought of goodwill.* The idea that every contact in business tends to help or hurt in the molding of public relations was ably expressed in a letter written by the late L. A. Downs, then president of the Illinois Central Railroad. He said:

Cultivation of goodwill is not a departmental activity, but the work of the entire organization. Friends are made, or can be alienated, by the operator who answers the telephone, the person who writes a letter, the clerk who sells a ticket or accepts a shipment; or, even through what is done or left undone by some member of the organization who does not come in direct contact with the public. *Every member of our company is a public relations worker*, and our reputation depends upon the skill with which each one does his part of the common task.

Speaking more directly of letters, Mr. Charles Kell, then personnel director of the General American Life Insurance Company, St. Louis, said in one of his training bulletins: "Business letters, like water, have a tendency to seek the lowest level unless there is a system of pump pressure to direct the flow. It is foolish and wasteful for any organization to build at great expense a high type sales organization, and be indifferent to the counteraction resulting from letters that fail to follow through."

*Routine letter that sold Illinois Central.* There is no reason why a routine letter, if written by someone properly motivated toward the company, cannot *sell* as well as *tell*. In the author's collection of good letters is one which aptly illustrates this fact. It came from the secretary of Mr. Downs, and handled a situation which every secretary encounters frequently.

Dear Mr. Frailey:

It will remind you that Illinois Central service extends far beyond our own rails when I tell you that Mr. Downs is calling on some of our shippers this week in California. As soon as he returns, I will show him your letter—and, of course, he will be glad to reply.

Bully for that girl! The situation was simple. All she *had* to do was to explain why there would be a delay in the answer to my letter. Mr. Downs was out of town. And that is exactly what the average secretary will tell you under the same circumstances. But this one was above average. She saw in this routine letter a chance to impress me with the size of her organization. She was a *salesman* for Illinois Central.

*A letter about Movement 26402627X.* In contrast with the above example of sales co-operation, consider the story of a friend who in-



herited an old-style watch. It had been his great-grandfather's, and of course, was big and amusing to see in these days of thin and elegant watch-cases. But my friend soon discovered that this ancient time-piece faithfully kept on the job. So he said: "This is a remarkable watch. It may look old-fashioned, but the old boy still keeps perfect time. I am going to write to the company that made this watch, and give them the number. Maybe they can tell me how old it really is. Besides, they will be glad to know that one of their watches is still doing a good job."

There was a routine situation to excite anybody with an ounce of sales blood. The clerk who answered that letter had a lot more to work with than did the secretary whose boss was out of town. He had the chance to say, "Thanks for telling us about your old watch. It is still good for many years of perfect service. You see, that's the way our watches always have been made—to last throughout the years, and never cause any trouble."

But, alas, and much woe! My friend's letter fell into the hands of a—well, judge for yourself. He had all the chance in the world to *sell* as well as *tell*. But here is what he wrote:

In response to your kind inquiry regarding *Movement 26402627X*, we wish to advise that our records show date of manufacture was July, 1886. We note your appreciation of our *product*, and trust this information will be of some interest to you.

What a travesty on public relations, that such a letter could have been written! Not only was the language full of "whiskers" (see Section 2 of this Handbook) but the writer evidently didn't realize that his company sold *watches*. My friend had inherited a "Movement"—not a watch; and then it became a "product." What about *your* wrist-movement? Does it keep good time?

The greatest fault of the letter, however, appears at the end—"and trust this information will be of some interest to *you*." Of interest to *him*? Why not of interest to the *company*?

Have we been too severe in our judgment of the clerk who wrote this routine letter? Well, perhaps so. Every day in business thousands of other clerks are writing routine letters with no better realization of how they could create friendly contacts—winning goodwill for the companies where they originate, and helping to *sell* their services. Yes, the fault rests more with the company than with the individual. We cannot expect the employees on these lower, routine jobs to make the most of letter opportunities unless they are *taught* and motivated. Perhaps Mr. Downs had talked to his secretary about the importance of the letters that she wrote; perhaps, from his own dynamic personality, she had absorbed some



of his sales enthusiasm. Perhaps nobody at the watch company had ever pointed the right letter-way to the clerk who wrote so dully about "Movement 26402627X." After all, it is the responsibility of leadership to *lead*. Somebody must make the letter-writers in American business see the importance of what they are doing. Somebody must train—motivate—they.

Yes, letter-contacts are part of the Public Relations Program. But this fact has little meaning until those who write the letters are conscious of it.

#### *4. Letters Need Executive Attention*

*Progress begins at the top.* Almost without exception it is true that the best letters are being written, consistently, and throughout all departments, in those companies where a major executive takes an active interest in the program. Preferably this major executive should be the president.

Since the president is usually the most respected individual in the company, his word has great weight. When the employees know he has "gone all out" for a project they are influenced to follow his example and to accept his suggestions without grumbling. Obviously, then, the first and most important step in the initiation of a better-letter program is a message from the president in which he gives his wholehearted approval. This message has more teeth if the president makes it plain that he expects complete co-operation—even from the top ranking executives, who may themselves need letter-instruction just as much or more than the other employees. It is an unhappy condition when the majority of the letter writers in a company are trying hard to write in the easy, natural, modern style, and letters 1776 vintage continue to roll out of the executive offices.

This need of executive co-operation is so urgent that no competent letter consultant will accept an assignment to establish a better-letter program until he is assured that all those who write letters in the company, from top to bottom, are ready to do their part.

*The check of carbon copies.* It is hardly possible that any executive can be absolutely sure what kind of a letter-job is being done in his company unless he takes an occasional inventory. This can best be done by asking that an extra carbon copy be made of each letter written on a certain day or during a longer period. An examination of these carbon copies will quickly reveal the weaknesses and strong points of the various letter-writers. In smaller companies where the number of dictators is not too numerous, this check-up can well be made by the president. In larger companies



it can be delegated to a vice-president, the personnel director, the office manager, or to some other high-ranking official. Needless to say, one requisite for the person chosen to take the inventory is that he must already be thoroughly trained in the principles of good letter construction. Otherwise, you would face the unhappy condition of the kettle calling the pot black—and the pot could not be expected to co-operate.

How the program can be carried out after the initial check of carbon copies is discussed in Section 7, but obviously the better-informed the chief executive is at the start with respect to what needs to be done, the better-equipped he is to ask co-operation from those who look to him for their bread and butter.

*To secure maximum return per dollar cost.* A very substantial reason for executive interest in the quality of the letters mailed from his organization is that they represent a major cost in the operation of the business. Because the average person tends to think of a letter in terms of a three-cent postage stamp, a piece of paper, and an envelope, there often exists an astonishing indifference to the total yearly cost of sending out the necessary letters. As a result, many an executive has no control over this expense although he may be extremely cautious in approving other expenditures not nearly as large.

As in the operation of any other phase of the business, the chief executive has the right to insist that the cost of company letters be no higher than is necessary to secure the desired results. He cannot be sure of that when the total has not been determined, and little or no curiosity has been shown about it by those who budget annual expense.

Thus, a queer situation exists in many a company. The cost of the personal calls made by salesmen is measured down to a split penny, and every effort is made to hold it down. Dependent upon the type of the business and the nature of the product, this cost per personal contact may run from one dollar up to many dollars. Furthermore, the sum varies for each individual according to his ability, persistence, and the territory where he works. Yes, a lot of time is spent checking these items—but in how many companies is the cost known for letter-calls? It is usually considered a part of the overhead, and hardly an item worth worrying about. The executive who feels that way is indeed headed for the surprise of his life—if and when he finally gets the facts. Letters cost money—plenty of money—more than you might think.

*What is the average cost of a business letter?* Fortunately, a number of intelligent surveys have been made to answer this question, and although the answer varies according to prevailing labor and



material costs, it still remains an interesting, and perhaps surprising figure. The most frequently mentioned survey was made a number of years ago by public accountants Ernst and Ernst for the Strathmore Paper Company. The purpose of that survey was to show how small in proportion to the total is the cost of the paper, especially the fractional difference in the cost of good paper stock as compared to poor. However, break-down of the other items involved still gives a reasonable basis for determining the cost of business letters, either in any company where an analysis is about to be made, or in any calendar period where the influence of labor and material expense is to be traced. Here is the break-down in percentages of the Ernst and Ernst report.

	(%)
Dictator's time.....	29.1
Stenographic time.....	34.5
Office overhead.....	25.5
Postage, first class.....	7.8
Stationery.....	3.1

With these percentages determined, it was easy for the public accountants to apply them to the following basic figures, which obviously are lower than they would be today: first, a salary of \$45 per week for the dictator, working forty-one and a half hours, and spending an average of six minutes on each letter; second, a salary of \$20 per week for the stenographer, averaging thirty letters per day; third, an office overhead estimated at forty per cent of the total labor cost; fourth, stationery cost based on printing the envelopes and letterheads in five thousand lots, in one color and on twenty-four pound stock; fifth, postage as set by Uncle Sam at 3¢ per letter for first-class service.

What was the final determination when the percentages and basic figures were combined?

Cost for dictation.....	\$ .1125
For transcription.....	.1333
Overhead.....	.0983
Postage.....	.0300
Stationery.....	.0121
Average cost.....	\$ .3862

It must be remembered that the above average cost per letter of almost 39¢ is not an absolute figure, since it would vary if the analysis were made at any other period of time. Today for example, the dictator's time would be distributed over forty work hours, or less, and certainly the estimated salaries, the overhead, and the cost for



stationery, would be considerably higher. It seems conservative and reasonable to say that the letters mailed today in American business are costing not less than fifty cents each.

*What is the annual cost?* You might approach the answer to this question with no particular concern. Fifty cents seems a small sum, but multiply it by the number of letters mailed annually and you quickly reach a different point of view. An average of one hundred letters mailed each working day would mean an annual cost of about fifteen thousand dollars. One hundred letters are "chicken-feed," though, compared to the actual number used daily by many companies. If the number is five hundred, the annual cost is about \$75,000; if one thousand, the annual cost is \$150,000. With these figures in mind, does it seem that the cost of letters to business is inconsequential? Far from it. The cost is substantial, and far exceeds many other items which commonly get the spotlight when the annual budget is prepared. Thus, the problem of getting the most value from every dollar spent may well deserve the attention of the chief executive, whose obligation it is to see that there is no waste or inefficiency in the business.

The chart "Are Your Letters Costing Too Much?" on the opposite page, suggests practical ways by which correspondence costs may be reduced. You will note that this chart, based on an analysis made by *American Business*, uses .524 as the prevailing cost per letter, which is slightly higher than the fifty cents just assumed to be a conservative and reasonable estimate.

*"When Frailey wore diapers."* Assuming that everything possible has been done to hold down letter costs, there still remains the major saving achieved when letters are made to do a better job. This brings us back again to the stern necessity of making sure that every dictator understands and *applies* the known principles of good letter construction. Hence, the company must maintain a program through which these principles are *taught*, and follow a system of control that will offset the tendency of letter-writers to slip back into old habits or to become careless and indifferent when little or no attention is given to their handiwork. Lighting the fire which motivates letter-writers to do a better job is a sure step forward, but throughout the year someone must keep the fire burning.

As in the accomplishment of any other objective in business, a program for better letters will succeed in proportion to how completely it gains, in practice and spirit, the co-operation of *all* who dictate. A few old-timers, with minds closed to the possibility that their own letters might be improved, and outspoken in their criticism of the company program, may prove to be a serious obstruction to progress.



Your author well remembers Mr. B., a sales manager in a large company where a concerted effort was being made to improve correspondence. Mr. B. wrote letters that were long, windy, and tiresome. Because of his lengthy service and high position, however, nobody felt qualified to step on his toes, or to suggest that he, too,

## ARE YOUR LETTERS COSTING TOO MUCH?

COST FACTOR	Average Cost	Possible Saving	HOW SAVINGS CAN BE MADE
<b>DICTATOR'S TIME</b> Based on a salary of \$50 a week of 40 hours, and an average of 8 minutes for each letter written. . . . .	.166	.016	10% by inaugurating a campaign, under supervision of correspondence adviser, to eliminate long-windedness in letters; equipping executives with dictating machines, desk "companion" files, and form paragraph indexes. A study made by one large company indicated that equipping executives with dictating machines saved 13% of their time.
<b>STENOGRAPHIC COST</b> Based on a salary of \$18 a week of 40 hours, and an average of 24 letters per day, including time taking dictation . . . . .	.15	.05	33% by centralizing stenographic and typing department; using transcribing and duplicating machines; modernizing typewriters; using efficiency desks and chairs; installing bonus plan. Under the bonus plan, operators are guaranteed a straight basic salary, regardless of the quantity of work produced. The quota set for each operator is 2,400 6-inch elite type lines per week, and a bonus is paid on all production over this quota, at the rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ ¢ per line (typewriters are equipped with devices which count the number of lines). One company which introduced the bonus plan reduced its cost per line from \$.0106 to \$.0064.
<b>NON-PRODUCTIVE LABOR</b> Time lost by dictator and stenographer due to waiting, illness, vacations, and other causes—10% of labor cost . . . . .	.031	.004	13% by using labor-saving equipment (such as automatic typewriters or duplicating machines for form letters) to reduce number of employees needed, with corresponding reduction in non-productive time losses.
<b>FIXED CHARGES</b> Depreciation, supervision, rent, light, interest, taxes, insurance, and similar overhead costs—40% of labor cost . . . . .	.126	.037	30% by savings in floor space through centralization of correspondence departments; labor-saving equipment reduces employee's compensation insurance needs.
<b>MATERIALS</b> Stationery, carbon papers, typewriter ribbons, pencils, and other supplies . . . . .	.007	.001	15% by using better quality paper, but baronial and note sizes for short letters; gang printing of inter-office letterheads and enclosures with other forms on office printing equipment.
<b>MAILING COST</b> Postage, gathering, sealing, stamping, and delivering to post office . . . . .	.032	.006	20% by use of modern sealing and stamping machines, not only to save labor but to reduce losses due to pilfering of stamp box.
<b>FILING COST</b> Clerk's time, depreciation on filing equipment, cost of filing supplies, etc. . . . .	.012	.001	15% by centralizing all files and filing operations; modernizing filing equipment and methods.
<b>TOTAL . . . . .</b>	.524	.115	

might benefit by taking advantage of the company's better-letter program. Finally, the problem of Mr. B. was dumped in the lap of the president. The latter waited until he had a particularly bad example of Mr. B.'s dictation—a verbose sales letter which had failed to produce any business—then the following conversation took place:

President: Mr. B., why don't you talk to Frailey about your next sales letter?

Mr. B.: Who, *me*?

President: Yes, why not? He has helped some of the other sales managers with their letters. Two heads are sometimes better than one, you know.

Mr. B.: Huh, that's ridiculous. Why *I* was writing letters when Frailey wore diapers.



It makes no difference how *long* a man has been writing business letters. The point is, does he know *how* to put punch and pull in them? There are principles to master. This Handbook seeks to explain and illustrate what they are—and how you can use them.

*Experience of a public utility.* A striking example of what can be done to make letters soften the wear and tear of public relations is that furnished by Chicago's Peoples Gas Light & Coke Company, an organization with almost a million customers to serve. All inquiries about gas bills, the opening and closing of accounts, and other customer requests are cleared through one department headed by an able executive, Charles L. Sullivan. Most of the contacts are by correspondence, although personal calls at the main and branch offices are welcomed.

As you would know, it is not easy for a public utility to serve so many customers without some misunderstandings. People tend to question the accuracy of the meters which determine their use of gas, and when a reading seems too high, or when a mistake occurs, they are quick to put on their fighting togs. To keep these customers satisfied is the goal of the Peoples Gas Company.

To help maintain this standard, it was decided several years ago that the men in the Customers' Department should learn how to write friendly, effective letters. First, they were sent to one of the Chicago night schools which furnished competent instruction in business letter-writing. Since then carbon copies have been checked regularly, and the entire group assembles once a week to discuss the findings. Not only have the men been thoroughly grounded in principles, but the idea has been kept alive that every letter written in the department must be a goodwill gesture to the customer. Even if the customer's letter is unfriendly, as seldom happens any more, the reply must reflect consideration and tactfulness.

The results of this letter crusade have been remarkable. Because of the gain in customer goodwill, there has been a sharp decrease in the number of complaints received, with a corresponding reduction in the personnel of the department. Moreover, thousands of letters have been received from customers expressing appreciation of the company's attitude and service. The people of Chicago like their gas company, and the mutual feeling of respect has made it easier to adjust those misunderstandings which are inevitable in the operation of a very large business.

Is this experience of the Peoples Gas Company exceptional? Yes, in comparison to the lukewarm efforts made by some organizations to improve their letters. However, there are many firms who have tackled the problem with similar persistence and have achieved the same gratifying results. Among those that can be



mentioned are Montgomery-Ward, the Gates Rubber Company, Jewel Tea Company, Monarch Life Insurance Company, the Household Finance Corporation, and numerous others of equal rank. There is no question but that in those organizations where the value of better letters has been recognized, and where an honest attempt has been made to motivate and train those who write them, the gain has far exceeded any imagined loss in time and cost.

*The tragic toll of indifference.* When we turn to those companies that continue to permit their letter-writers to shift for themselves, the picture is both dismal and discouraging. We know the cost of writing letters in business. We wonder how executives can continue to be indifferent to sales letters that do not sell, collection letters that do not collect, and adjustment letters that do not adjust. The principles of letter-writing are not difficult to master. Indifference to them takes a tragic toll which could very easily be avoided. The reaction to a business letter, as to a personal contact, may often persist throughout the years. You never know when a poor letter may rise from the grave to haunt you or someone else who then becomes the victim of its misguided approach.

There's the memory of a young man who years ago was trying to sell rice for a Texas mill. It was the end of a hard week, and the orders had been scant. Ever hopeful, he went late one afternoon into the buyer's office of a grocery jobber. The buyer was cordial, and he poked his finger with interest in the various sample boxes. Finally he selected certain numbers and began to assemble the specifications for a carload of rice. The young man's heart beat faster. It was satisfying to know that he could send a good order to his company that night, instead of relaying the usual excuses.

Until that moment, the buyer had not been concerned with the name of the mill. Then he frowned. Leaving his office, he returned in a few minutes with a letter which was yellow and brittle with age. It had been written thirty years before, as the young man soon found out, by the credit manager of the mill he represented. And this is what the buyer said: "Young man, I am sorry, but you may tear up that order. Here is a letter which I received thirty years ago from your company. I have been in business a long time, and this is the most insulting letter that I ever had to read. I was a little pressed for cash at the time, but I wasn't a deadbeat or a thief. In Texas an unpaid bill is not an excuse for discourtesy. I wouldn't care to deal with your mill, sir. Please don't call on me again."

The young man learned the hard way how important a business letter can be. You see, this is a true story. The young man is now writing this Handbook.



## 5. *The Personal Value of Knowing How*

*Importance to the individual.* Knowing how to write good business letters is an asset in any career. With the increasing importance of letters, and the growing recognition that they help or hurt company objectives, it may even be said that the individual who lacks a thorough knowledge of letter-principles is seriously handicapped in the building of his own career. Other qualities being equal, the capable letter-writer is more likely to win promotion than someone in his department who has neglected to acquire the same knowledge and skill. More and more in the future, the man who can "talk on paper" to a customer or prospect in a friendly, forceful way will be marked as the one valuable to his company, and his progress will be accelerated.

If this be true, and it is, then why should any person who hopes to advance in business be indifferent to the importance of letters, or fail to utilize any and every opportunity to become an expert letter-carpenter? If the company provides this opportunity, the problem is simple. If not, the individual may himself create it—there are night schools to attend, books to read, and others to study who have already mastered the art. The road is not barred to anyone who has an adequate knowledge of language and how to use it.

*College education not required.* Unlike many other fields of human endeavor—medicine, law, engineering, chemistry—where advanced education is necessary, you do not need to be a college graduate to master the principles of letter-writing. Average intelligence, common sense, and the right mental attitude—plus the willingness to accept and apply the suggestions offered in this and other books—are the chief essentials. Once you know *what* you are trying to do, and *how* it should be done, the rest is accomplished by practice on the job.

Out of your own experience, you begin to compare results. You thought sales letters A and B were equally good. You prepared them carefully, using the formula of the Star, the Chain, and the Hook (Section 3). But when results were counted, letter A proved to be a whangdoodle and letter B only a whiffenpoof. Why? When you are able to spot the reason, you are a more seasoned letter-writer. You grow in skill as you play the game.

*The news gets around.* The individual who masters the art of writing a good letter does not remain unnoticed for long. His skill is respected, and you hear it said of him, "John Doe can help with that letter . . . see John Doe . . . John Doe writes the best letters in the company." The news gets around, and soon John



Doe's ability reaches executive ears. He is tagged as one worth watching. His chances for promotion are enhanced.

*Needs of a good letter-man.* Almost any individual in business can learn to write better-than-average letters. The slogan for success (see Section 2) is "Relax . . . be natural . . . just talk." Beyond this capacity for letting your hair down and being your every-day natural self, however, there are certain skills and qualities which are needed in the preparation of effective business letters. Although these are discussed more fully in later chapters, a preview will do no harm.

1. You cannot very well dictate a good letter unless you can put words together into correct sentences; that skill involves a workable knowledge of grammar, and a vocabulary sufficiently large to express any thought you wish to convey.

2. It cannot be stated too often—there are certain tested principles which must be mastered, both for general letter-writing and for specific types such as sales, collection, and adjustment. There is nothing about the learning of these principles to frighten anybody—but you *must know them*.

3. No man can successfully serve a company with his head but not with his heart. Loyalty breeds an enthusiasm which is reflected in the letters that you dictate. In plain words, unless you like your company and your job you should quit.

4. The more you know about the products of your company and the nature of the services rendered, the better you are equipped to talk about them in a letter. This is especially true of situations where sales and complaints are involved. The good letter-writer does not sit in a shell, and remain indifferent to what goes on about him. Instead, he knows how the company products are made and why they are good. Consequently he can write with enthusiasm about them—and that gives him *power* which otherwise he would lack.

5. A genuine liking for people is a "must" that seems to require little comment. If the objective is to make every letter a cordial contact, then the writer must *feel* cordial. Any assumption of insincere friendliness would instantly be sensed by the reader. A liking for people leads to an understanding of human nature. You understand their problems, their point of view and because you "talk their language" you are accepted as a friend even when you must say "no."

6. Imagination is a valuable asset to the letter-writer. Many think of it as a vague something which one must be born with. This is not strictly true, although certain people seem more en-



dowed than others. Imagination is basically the taking of images (memories of experiences) from the mind where they have been stored, and creating from them new combinations or mental pictures. Thus, in a practical sense, and that's as far as we need to go, the business man is using imagination when he *looks ahead*. Perhaps a new building is to be erected. He imagines first of all the uses to which it may be put, and then considers how it should be designed to achieve these uses. Another man thinks of the company's radio program under preparation. He imagines the folks who will be listening—their habits and desires—then he seeks to slant the program to fit the mental picture he has formed. Imagination gives color and life to a letter. It can be cultivated more easily than you think.

7. Whether or not a sense of humor is inherited, acquired, or both, can be left to the psychologists. Certainly, it may be described as a mental attitude which enables one to take the good and bad of life not too seriously; in that sense it would seem capable of cultivation. Humor in a letter is desirable when not overdone. No reader, for example, wants to feel that his problem has not been taken seriously, nor does he want to be the *object* of the fun. On the other hand, it has been proved frequently that a dash of humor can improve a letter's pull. Later in this Handbook you will encounter many successful letters in which there is a smile or even a guffaw. You, too, will enjoy them, as surely as did the original readers.

8. Even though the mention of another quality essential to success as a letter-writer might appear to come from the pulpit rather than the desk of a business man, the fact remains that moral stability is necessary in the handling of all forms of public relations. Letters reflect the character of the writers. The customer or prospect is placed in the mood for favorable reaction when he feels he is reading the words of an honest, impartial, dependable man. Of course, in business there are always some who think they are smart enough to pull the wool over the customer's eyes. Such writers fool only themselves. Good letter-men place their cards face-up on the table. They play the game fairly; they practice the Golden Rule.



## SECTION

## 2

# BUSINESS LETTER LANGUAGE

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## SECTION

# 2

## BUSINESS LETTER LANGUAGE

### 1. *A Human Contact Across Space*

*Accomplished by putting words on paper.* As explained in the previous section, an effective business letter is a personal contact between two human beings. To save time and to cross space quickly, the writer of the letter puts a message on paper which otherwise he would prefer to deliver in person; thus a conversation begins. The writer has "first say," but he may, and often does, invite the reader to reply. As the letters pass back and forth, the two persons *talk* to each other until there is a meeting of minds, or, for lack of it, the conversation ends.

The man who writes with a sense of personal contact has a better chance to make what he says interesting and convincing than the one who feels he is "writing letters." The good dictator says to his secretary, "Bring your book, I want to talk to this man about paying his bill." The poor dictator is more likely to say, "Bring your book, I must write a letter about this delinquent account." Both dictate for the same purpose, but the first is mentally stepping into the shoes of the fellow who later will be reading what he says, while the other stays in his own office, physically *and* mentally.

If you want to write successful letters, always keep in mind that you are going to talk across space. In reality, you put your thoughts on paper, then you jump into an envelope and travel to where the reader lives or works. Out you pop with a friendly hand-clasp, ready to tell him why he should give you an order, or pay his past-due bill, or merely that you like him a lot as a customer, and will continue to serve him the best that you can. No matter what you talk *about*, the language you use is the same as if you had met him on the street, in his home, or at his office.

*No special language of business.* Contrary to what some may believe, as revealed in their colorless and tiresome letters, there is no special language for business—not unless "special" means making an extra effort to be natural, so that the reader will be warmed by your friendly personality and feel that a likable human being has



paused to chat with him. True, you want your sentences to be grammatically correct and free from slang or profanity—you are not on the golf course, or riding to work—nevertheless you are not using a *different* language. You are only dressing it up a little bit.

Of course, you do get letters in which the writers seem to think they are “on parade.” Maybe they are thinking about the “dignity of business,” or they have been taught that letters should be cold and formal—cold as an oyster, formal as the King’s butler. People who feel like that about letters are more to be pitied than blamed. They haven’t an equal chance in competition with other letter-writers who practice the rule, “Relax . . . be natural . . . just talk.” They are hopelessly handicapped by their stiff or stilted language. They can’t possibly be accepted as friendly human beings or win favor by what they say. The reader simply yawns, and walks away.

*One of the family.* The president of your company doesn’t want letter contacts to be cold and formal. He knows that the most loyal customer is the one who feels like “one of the family.” The following letter, amusing though it may be, illustrates the point. It was mailed by a lady in Michigan to an employee of Montgomery Ward in Chicago.

Ever since receiving your letter, and the enclosed refund check, I have worn a grin like that of the Cheshire cat. Perhaps you’ll see the joke if I tell you.

A number of years ago, I visited a friend in Illinois. One day we came home to find her landlady dressed all in black, with her nose all red from weeping. She could hardly control her grief as she read us an item in the paper. Her friend, her *personal* friend (sob), one of the firm, one of the head officers of Montgomery-Ward, was *dead*.

No, she had never seen him. But he did (sob) write her the loveliest letters! Ever since that time that a mistake had been made in one of her orders, and she had written about it! He (sob) had answered *personally*, and he had made them correct the mistake, and he had told her that he would attend to her letters and orders *himself*! And now (sob-sob) he was *dead*.

And did we think it would be all right if she sent some flowers? She had some lovely marigolds and zinnias in her garden.

And now *I’ve* got a “personal friend.” I can picture him as that old lady did *her* friend, trotting around from department to department, giving his “personal attention” to the selection of a paper of pins, measuring off two yards of tatting, and picking out the largest quart cup in the store!

Please don’t die, Mr. R. What should I do without you? And I have no marigolds or zinnias.



Yes, we can smile at the little old lady pictured in the letter. And so did the lady from Michigan! But beneath the story is a fact important to the success of any business. When a man can write letters in such a cordial way that the customer feels a "personal friend" is speaking, then a great good has been accomplished for the company. The relationship may often endure throughout the years and spread to friends and relatives, so that many, many sales are developed—and all from a few friendly letters.

*When language habits are barriers.* Since the language used in a business letter largely determines how successfully a human contact is made with the reader, common sense tells us that we should examine our dictation carefully to make sure that we have no language habits hindering the effectiveness of the contact. Bad habits in word usage do exist, and any one of them may be a barrier that tends to hold writer and reader apart.

Unfortunately, some of the guilty dictators, usually older men long established in business, meet with a cold eye any suggestion that their style could be improved. Indignantly they reply, "This is the way we've always done it"—a condition of mental obsolescence for which there is no cure—and they keep on dictating letters that confuse or repel their readers. For example, here is a monstrosity in words which was actually mailed from the head office of an insurance company to a policyholder in North Carolina.

Surrender of the policy is permissible only within the days attendant the grace period, in compliance with the citation relevant options accruing to the policy. We are estopped from acquiescing to a surrender prior to the policy's anniversary date.

We are confident that an investigation relevant the incorporation of this feature will substantiate that the policies are not at variance with policies of other insurance companies.

Fine letter, isn't it? So easy to read—a friendly contact with a customer! Can't you see the smiling face of the writer between the lines? How pleased that North Carolina mountaineer must have been! That insurance company was fortunate to have on hand a letter-expert who knew how to hold the goodwill of a policyholder.

You think so? Nonsense! Of course you do not. Could there be a poorer attempt to contact a policyholder? By what strange and distorted concept was the writer driven? Where did he get the idea that a business letter should display as many big words as possible? Was he just a beginner trying to show his wisdom, or an old fuddy-duddy who believed heart and soul in the "dignity" of business?

Apparently, the policyholder had written to the company, and



requested the surrender of his policy. The answer was "No." A little word with two letters would have done the job, but what did the insurance man say? "We are estopped from acquiescing"—how much more impressive! Say those words aloud—"estopped from acquiescing"! Maybe they sound pretty but they certainly don't belong in a business letter. How *could* any human being talk to another in such a queer lingo? Perhaps he swallowed a bumblebee just before he started to dictate.

You see, the writer of that letter had formed one of the bad language habits which become barriers between writer and reader. His fault was "goozling." We will hear more about it later in this section of the Handbook.

## 2. *The Old-Time Whiskers*

*Word combinations of ancient vintage.* Because in the early days of our nation letters were mostly used for formal purposes, the language was very cold and stilted. Those were the days when you might have ended a letter with, "Your obedient servant," or, "We beg to remain, dear Sirs, Faithfully yours." And of course the whole of your letter would have contained many other equally stilted phrases. Such word combinations are a long way removed from the natural, informal language which adds interest and personality to the modern letter.

However, before you criticize too severely the writers of these early letters, you must remember that the social customs of the upper class were much more formal than they are today. The language which sounds so funny to us now was actually *used* in high society. You see they were partly, at least, following our modern rule for letter-writing—*Write as you talk*. The people of the middle and lower classes had little necessity for letters, and their use in business was the exception rather than the rule.

Today many of the old customs have vanished. Men no longer wear knee pants, silver buckles on their shoes, or powdered wigs. Women no longer favor hoop-skirts, tightly drawn corsets, or high-buttoned shoes. These are modern times of careless informality—of sport shirts, sweaters, slacks, and two-piece bathing suits—and a host of inventions which have also tended to break down class distinctions and bring people together on a basis of free and easy living. Yes, men still wear "soup and fish" suits to certain formal occasions but they grumble at the idea. Women have their evening gowns, too, but these are cut to reveal more charm than when a party dress called for several petticoats and perhaps a bustle.



The modern tempo is to be *natural*—in dress, in speech, in all other human relationships.

*The "Whiskers" linger on.* With all these changes from the old days to the new, you would scarcely expect to find some business men still using the language of 1776 in their letters. For some strange, unexplainable reason, however, the stilted phrases of yesterday are frequently encountered, although they make impossible that friendly personal contact which we have seen is the aim of any good business letter. For example, here are some sentences taken from the carbon copies of letters mailed recently from the home office of an insurance company.

*We herewith take the liberty of acknowledging your letter of recent date.*

*Attached hereto, you will please find same.*

*Thanking you very kindly, we beg to remain,*

*In reply to your letter of the 21st instant, we would wish to state,*

*Trusting you will be in a position to do same, we are,*

*Your favor has duly come to hand, and we beg to advise,*

The italicized phrases are *not* the language of modern speech. They are throw-backs—as obsolete and old-fashioned as candle-light or the pump in the village square. The most serious charge against them is that such phrases tend to destroy rather than help the chances of a business letter to succeed. The writer cannot possibly talk in a friendly, natural way with such stiff-shirt language. His true personality is hidden just as his face might be with a two-week-old beard. And that's why your author calls them "Whiskers"—colorless word combinations, embalmed with cold formality—barriers which keep writer and reader utterly apart.

But call them what you will—whiskers, rubber-stamps, stilted phrases—they are taboo in business letters. They make the job hard that should be easy. They throttle personality. They destroy goodwill. They *lessen results*. For this last reason, if for no other, there is nothing good that can be said for Whiskers. Common sense tells us we should do nothing to interfere with the chief objectives of business, namely, to win public acceptance, cultivate goodwill, sell goods, and make a profit. Whiskers obstruct these objectives. Why should any business man cling to them?

*Three examples.* If you think that a mountain is being made out of a molehill, and that actually very few whiskers are found in mod-



ern business correspondence, you are as wrong as wrong can be. Look at the morning mail which comes to any office and you will find a certain percentage of letters done in the style and spirit of quill-pen days. Here are three of thousands that the writer has collected.

Answering your esteemed favor of recent date, which has been duly received and contents noted, we wish to kindly advise that according to our records, your policy went forth in your direction on the 28th instant.

Pursuant to your question about premiums, we would wish to state that the writer has referred same to our Mr. Jones, who will write to you in due course of time or in the very near future.

Trusting this letter will come to hand, we beg to remain,

. . . . .

We regret to learn from your esteemed communication that you were unable to favor us with your recent order on which we had the pleasure of quoting, inasmuch as you found it to your advantage to place your order elsewhere at this time.

However, we appreciate your kind indulgence, and trust when you are again in the market that we will have the pleasure of receiving your valued inquiry. At that time, we will endeavor to submit prices and samples to merit our receiving your valued order.

Thanking you for the courtesies extended Mr. Black, and awaiting your further commands at all times with interest, we remain,

. . . . .

Esteemed Policy-Holder:

Acknowledging with grateful appreciation, receipt of your esteemed favor of the 3rd instant, and to express the hope for the esteemed continuance of your esteemed patronage, we are,

Obediently yours,

No doubt the writers of those three letters are pleasant young men. At home, in the office, they may attract others to them by the warmth of their personalities. But from the way they have written we have the right to picture three very old men, severe-eyed and white-bearded, clothed in the attire of the last century, seated on high stools, and laboriously writing with quill pens. As full of language freaks as these letters are, perhaps the prize of all is the statement in the first of them—"Your policy went forth in your direction." What a blessing, at least, that it was headed toward the reader.



*Nobody talks that way.* Can you imagine yourself, or any other human being of our times, *talking* the language of those letters? Would any lover say on the telephone to his sweetheart, "Darling, I wish to state, I'll be over at eight"? Or, later in the evening (perhaps, morning) when seated on the davenport would he say, "I beg to advise, it's time to arise"?

On leaving home this morning, did Mr. Business Man say to his wife as he kissed her good-bye (we hope), "With respect to the information duly received that you will serve corned-beef and cabbage tonight, I take great pleasure in advising that I will be on hand to partake of same"?

What if your company had received a request that a salesman call with information about a certain product? Would the salesman begin his interview as follows: "In reply to your kind request of recent date, I hand you herewith a sample of the product you mentioned. We will appreciate your kind indulgence in giving same your esteemed consideration." No, you have never heard whisker-talk from a salesman. It wouldn't get him any orders.

If people do not use these moth-eaten old phrases in speech, why do they use them in their letters? That is a sixty-four dollar question. Can anybody answer it?

*Good until the bottom drops out.* A truly remarkable example of what Whiskers can do to a letter is the following application for a job. The young man who wrote it was resourceful. He had read William H. Danforth's famous book, *I Dare You*, the theme of which is that we set our own ceilings in life—and can go as far as we dare to think we can. This young man made a clever attempt to dare the author who had dared *him*. Here is his letter:

Dear Mr. Danforth:

I have just finished reading your wonderful book, *I Dare You*, and so I am daring myself to write you this letter.

I am nineteen years old, and have had only one year in high school, but I am trying to make up for that by studying at night. Right now, I am making ten dollars a week in a grocery store. My dad is out of work, and I am trying to help support him and my sister, but ten dollars doesn't go very far.

Now, Mr. Danforth, that is my story, and I DARE YOU to give me a better job, and if you have no opening for me in your company, then I DARE YOU to find one.

Thanking you very kindly, and hoping to hear from you in the near future, I remain,

Yours very truly,



As you read that letter, you can't help but feel the personality of a nice young chap who seems to be made of good stuff, and is worthy of the job he is after. The language most of the way is natural. You can almost hear the young fellow *talking*. And then the bottom drops out!

Had he stopped without the last paragraph, the ending would have been strong and impelling. You could hardly devise a better close than, "Then I DARE YOU to find one."

But what happened? Who knows? Perhaps the youngster had written his letter and then handed it to some older person, perhaps his father. "Do you think this letter will get me the job?" he probably asked.

If we are guessing right, the father handed the letter back with this comment, "Well, son, it needs a better ending—something more businesslike—I'll show you what I mean."

No matter why the letter happened to end so sourly, you will agree that the whole effect was spoiled by the bromides in the closing sentence. Until then, we heard the voice of an ambitious young man, fighting to lift himself by the bootstraps. Then his voice is gone, and we have instead some hidebound old fellow who speaks from the musty past.

*Leather breeches for George Washington.* While it has been necessary to blame these obsolete phrases that still plague us on the era when they were in daily use, please do not think *all* men in those times followed the same unnatural style. In all ages of recorded history there have been those who spoke and wrote so that their true selves were reflected. You find no platitudes in this letter by George Washington.

Nov. 5, 1782

Dear Sir,—By Doctor Gregg I send you \$6.92. which appears to be the balance due you for your lands. I pray you get me made, by measure enclosed, a pair of the nicest and best leather breeches.

I know not at this time who is esteemed the most celebrated maker, or I would not trouble you with so small a matter. Formerly there was a person called (I think) the Carabous, by which very neat breeches were made . . .

I should beg to have them sent as soon as possible. I shall thank you for reiterating my request that they be made roomy in the seat. They generally make them so tight in the thigh that it is with difficulty they can be drawn on.

The measure enclosed is the size I would have, not what they could be brought to by stretching.



The ending was quite simple—"Yours, G. Washington." It is hoped that the letter did the job, and that Mr. Washington got his breeches "roomy in the seat."

*A letter nineteen centuries old.* Many of us know Cicero for the times we met him in our study of Latin. Although the experience was not entirely pleasant to some of us, Cicero did write letters with a friendly human tone which most of us in modern business could well afford to imitate. Of course, they were personal letters, but we doubt if Cicero would have changed his style to sell goods, collect money, or allay the anger of a disgruntled customer. In the passages below, notice how he just starts talking, and talks on to the end.

Cicero to Atticus, Greeting!

So they deny that Publius has been made a plebeian, do they? This is certainly sheer tyranny and not to be bourned. Let Publius send some one to witness my affidavit. I will take my oath that my friend Gnaeus, Balbus' colleague, told me at Antium that he had himself assisted at taking the auspices.

Fancy two such delightful letters of yours being delivered at one and the same time. I don't know how to pay you back for your good news, though I candidly confess my debt. Here's a coincidence. I had just taken the turn off the road to Antium . . . when my friend Curio met me, fresh from Rome: and at the very same moment your man with a letter.

Curio inquired whether I hadn't heard the news. "No," said I. "Publius is standing for the tribuneship," says he. "You don't say so!" "And he is at deadly enmity with Caesar," he replies, "and wants to annul all those laws of his." "And what is Caesar doing?" I inquired. "He is denying that he ever proposed Clodius' adoption." Then he emptied the vials of his own wrath and that of Memmius and Metellus Nepos.

I embraced the youth and said goodbye, being in a hurry to get to your letters. What a lot of nonsense is talked about "viva vox"? Why, I learned a dozen times as much about affairs from your letter as from his talk . . . and you have made me wild with inquisitiveness about that "fast" dinner. My curiosity is insatiable: but I have no grievance at your omitting to write an account of the dinner. I would much rather hear it by word of mouth . . .

To be sure, the individuals Cicero wrote about may not now be so interesting to us, but the informality of his style is the same as that of the best modern letter-writers. There were no whiskers in Cicero's letter.

*A device for lazy thinkers.* When some folks call the obsolete



phrases "rubber-stamps" they doubtless are thinking of the ease with which they may be used. It takes very little thought to dictate a letter when one's mind is merely a file of stock expressions. Without any effort, the dictator can say, "We have your letter of," or "Thanking you in advance, we remain." These and similar canned expressions can be used over and over again. It's the lazy way to write, but like anything else that comes too easily, the result is nothing to brag about. Canned letters lack the tang and flavor of those served fresh for each occasion.

This fact is well expressed in a poem originally printed in *Nation's Business*. The author is Charles Abel.

If we could write the things we feel,  
 Could make imagination real—  
 If pencil, paper, pen and ink  
 Had but the gift to make us think,  
 We'd shed our studied attitudes,  
 Inane remarks and platitudes,  
 And write our missives just as though  
 They went to people whom we know.

We'd scorn such terms as "even date"  
 And "in reply we beg to state;"  
 "Regarding" would not be "in re,"  
 Our meaning would be plain as day.  
 "Yours truly" we would not "remain,"  
 From stilted phrases we'd refrain—  
 How vivid would our letters be  
 In simple Phraseology!

No "15th inst." or "19th ult."  
 Our reader's senses would insult;  
 From florid bombast like "esteemed"  
 Our sentences would be redeemed.  
 In homely words and simple style  
 We'd write each letter with a smile;  
 Oh! What a difference—goodness knows—  
 If we would write plain English prose!

Okay, Mr. Abel. It's a pity all business men haven't read your verses—and especially those who cleave to the old-time whiskers.

*Example cited by McQueen.* Fortunately, there are in America many letter-men who are fighting to eliminate the formal language which still appears in business correspondence and eventually this united effort may win. We can only hope for the best. One of the crusaders, Harold P. McQueen of Chicago, cites the following example in which "Squibbs," the bookkeeper, had received a large check in full payment for a purchase made by a new customer.



Squibbs rightly felt that the situation deserved a letter of thanks, and this is the one he wrote.

We beg to acknowledge receipt of your check No. 3433 in the amount of \$5,550 in payment of our invoice dated June 7th, for which please accept our thanks.

Enclosed please find receipted bill for your files.

Trusting we may be favored with your future orders, we remain,

The facts in this case were no different from those in thousands of others. The bookkeeper was really grateful for the check. A nice little glow of appreciation warmed his heart. His intentions were good. He wanted to thank the customer, and no doubt thought his letter did a fine job. In the words of Mr. McQueen, however, "it was too much like throwing a cold blanket over the whole pleasant transaction." Too much whisker-talk!

So this was the revision which made the mailbag.

Of course we are always glad to get checks in the mail, but with yours received this morning, came an added satisfaction. We take it to be a very tangible expression on your part that you are satisfied.

Your attitude made the execution of our work a pleasure, and this letter expresses the sentiments of those of us who had the pleasure of meeting you and working with you.

If one hundred new customers were asked which of these two letters pleased them more, how do you suppose they would vote?

*Whiskers here, there, everywhere.* It would be incorrect to say that old-time, shelf-worn phrases are used more frequently in certain types of business and professions, and that other occupations are practically immune to whiskers. Although we know of no surveys that point to such a conclusion, offhand it seems—and this is only an opinion—you do encounter more whiskers in the letters of politicians, lawyers, traffic clerks, government employees, and purchasing agents, than in the letters of sales managers, personnel directors, advertising managers, credit men, and executives. In general, women in business seem to be less hidebound as letter-writers than men, but this, too, is merely an impression. As you would expect, older men with twenty, thirty, or forty years' service are more likely to use stilted language than are younger men who have not been subjected to the habits and traditions of earlier days in business. In companies where better-letter programs have been operating for a number of years, much progress has been made, with the result



that only a few die-hards continue to use cut-and-dried canned lingo.

In general, though, whiskers may be found here, there, and everywhere that letters are written. Why this foolish and wasteful language habit is so difficult to eradicate is impossible to explain. In hundreds of books, magazine articles, and speeches, business men have been told why they should make their letters personal, human, and natural. They nod their heads in assent, then later dictate sentences like these:

We wish to advise consideration would not be in order at the present time. We crave your indulgence in this respect, and regret our inability to authorize gratis replacement in this instance. (From the desk of an executive in the automobile industry)

We beg to acknowledge receipt of your favor of the 21st instant, and in replying have pleasure in begging to advise your order has been duly shipped. (Signed by the vice-president of a large corporation)

We beg to acknowledge receipt of your communication, and under separate cover we are forwarding forthwith additional copies. We trust this action has your esteemed approval and beg to remain, (Dictated by an advertising manager)

Anticipating our thanks for a reply at your earliest convenience, which we trust will be soon in our hands, we are, (A president was father to this one)

In compliance with your request of the 24th instant, I transmit herewith a blank voucher for pension due you. (United States Pension Agent)

We have, therefore, checked and approved same and are returning herewith one copy to you, and are retaining the other and oblige. (A purchasing agent claims it)

You have seen how whisker-talk tends to hide personality and mechanize letters. The sentences just quoted are from the letters of six business men, but read them aloud, and you would swear that they were dictated by one man. How could such language, under any circumstances, create the illusion of *personal* contact? The reader is chilled by a conglomeration of words which sound more as if they came from robot than from man.



*Rhymes that ridicule whisker-talk.* To shame the users of these obsolete phrases—perhaps, to put a “hex” on them so that they can sin no more—many leaders in the reform movement have turned to rhyme. One of the verses is titled, “The Ancient Lullaby”—the author is unknown. Reading this lullaby aloud every morning before going to work should help any dictator to “shave off the whiskers.”

### *The Ancient Lullaby*

We beg to advise, and wish to state  
That yours has arrived of recent date.  
We have it before us, its contents noted,  
Herewith enclosed, the prices we quoted.  
Attached you will find, as per your request,  
The sample you wanted, and we would suggest,  
Regarding the matter and due to the fact  
That up to this writing your order we've lacked,  
We hope you will not delay it unduly,  
And we beg to remain, yours very truly.

Equally amusing, and perhaps helpful if the shoe pinches, is the following:

### *The Man Who Writes His Letters Cut-and-Dried*

There are seven hundred species of fossilic business men,  
But there's really only one I can't abide;  
He's a remnant from a cycle of an age the Lord knows when—  
This man who writes his letters cut-and-dried!

He's a stenographic corps, his equipment's up-to-date,  
And his secretary's blond and very sleek;  
Yet he “begs to state in answer” and refers “to even date”—  
Uses ancient business lingo worse than Greek!

Oh! I know that he's “efficient,” that his work is always planned—  
Yet his customers get letters in reply,  
Which announce: “Your valued order of the seventh inst. at hand”  
And “referring to the same, we state hereby—!”

Oh! won't some kindly Angel warn this fellow of his doom,  
Some Angel pause a moment by his side  
And tell him that the Business Ward of Heaven has no room  
For men who write their letters cut-and-dried!

Also pertinent is the rhyme aimed at the “beggars” in business dictation—an orphan whose daddy is unknown.



*The Beggars*

They beg to inquire and they beg to state,  
 They beg to advise and they beg to relate;  
 They beg to observe and they beg to mention,  
 They beg to call your kind attention;  
 They beg to remark and they beg to remind,  
 They beg to inform you will herewith find;  
 They beg to announce and they beg to intrude,  
 They beg to explain and they beg to include;  
 They beg to acknowledge, they beg to reply,  
 They beg to apologize, they beg to deny;  
 They reluctantly beg for a moment of time,  
 They beg to submit you and offer sublime;  
 'Till I wish I could put that annoying array  
 Of beggars on horseback and send them away!

One of the best of the rhymes that poke fun at "parrot-talk" is a collection letter concocted by William H. Butterfield, Educational Director of the N.R.C.A.—a leading authority on business letters and the author of many books devoted to their improvement.

Please permit us to call your kind attention  
 To your valued account which we must mention.  
 Your esteemed order has just come to hand  
 In connection with which we cannot understand  
 Why our records now show a balance past due  
 Of three hundred dollars still owing from you.

If we may have your kind permission,  
 Would suggest your account is in poor condition.  
 We beg to advise you so please may we state  
 That our communications of recent date,  
 Though aimed to preserve our friendly relation,  
 Have brought neither payment nor explanation.

The favor of an answer to previous letters  
 Would have been forthcoming from most of our debtors;  
 So again we request and wish to remind you  
 That your September invoice is long past due.  
 The charge in our ledger under your valued name  
 Shows three months' delay in payment of same.

Please note you've not paid in accordance with terms;  
 Yet we, too, owe bills to a good many firms.  
 If you can't hand us payment in full at this time,  
 Would advise in near future you drop us a line.  
 What can we say if inquiry is made,  
 Asking how promptly your bills have been paid?

Your September invoice is still on our books;  
 We beg to point out how badly this looks.



We earnestly urge you to pay your account.  
 Won't you please forward check made in this amount?  
 We take pleasure in thanking you now in advance,  
 For we know you'll avail yourself of this chance.

Lacking the courtesy of a reply,  
 We must use other methods by-and-by.  
 So just mail check to cover by return mail  
 That our friendly relations may still prevail.  
 The day it arrives, we hasten to mention,  
 Your order will have our most prompt attention.

Trusting you know what speed this assures,  
 We beg to remain, Very truly yours.\*

So much for the worn-out, hackneyed expressions so often seen in business letters—whiskers, rubber-stamps, chestnuts, call them as you please. They are sleeping pills which defeat the aim of making every letter a warm, *personal contact* with the reader.

### YOU DON'T TALK THIS WAY

(Letter-Whiskers)

according to our records  
 acknowledge receipt of  
 acknowledge with pleasure  
 acknowledging yours of  
 advise (meaning to tell)  
 and oblige  
 answering yours of  
 anticipating your advice  
 anticipating your favor  
 anticipating your order  
 anticipating your reply  
 as captioned above  
 as per  
 as regards  
 as stated above  
 assuring you of  
 as to your favor  
 as to your esteemed favor  
 at all times  
 at an early date  
 at hand  
 at the present time  
 at the present writing  
 at this time  
 at your convenience  
 attached hereto

attached herewith  
 attached please find  
 awaiting your further wishes  
 awaiting your order  
 awaiting your reply

beg to acknowledge  
 beg to advise  
 beg to assure  
 beg to call your attention  
 beg to confirm  
 beg (begging) to remain  
 beg to state  
 beg to suggest

carefully noted  
 check to cover  
 complying with your favor of  
 complying with your request  
 concerning yours of  
 contents noted  
 contents duly noted  
 continued patronage

deem (for think)  
 desire to state

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due to the fact  
duly noted

esteemed favor  
esteemed order  
esteemed request  
even date

favor (for letter)  
favor us with your order  
favor us with your reply  
for your files  
for your information

hand you herewith  
has come to hand  
have before us  
have your kind favor  
herely advise  
herely insist  
herewith inclose  
herewith find  
herewith please find  
hoping for your favor  
hoping for your order  
hoping to receive

I am (ending last sentence)  
I beg to advise  
I have your letter of  
I trust

in accordance with  
in answer to same  
in answer to yours  
in conclusion would state  
in connection therewith  
in due course  
in due course of time  
in re  
in reference to  
in receipt of  
in reply to your favor  
in reply would advise  
in reply would wish  
in response to yours  
in response to your favor  
in the amount of  
in the near future  
in this connection  
inclosed find  
inclosed herewith  
inclosed please find  
instant (inst.)

kind favor  
kind indulgence  
kind order  
kindly advise  
kindly be advised  
kindly confirm same

looking forward to

may we suggest  
may we hope to receive  
meets your approval

of above date  
order has gone forward  
our Mr. ———  
our line  
our records show

past favor  
per  
permit us to remind  
please accept  
please advise (be advised)  
please find herewith  
please find inclosed  
please note  
please rest assured  
please return same  
pleasure of a reply  
proximo (prox.)  
pursuant to

re  
recent date  
recent favor  
referring to yours of  
regarding the matter  
regarding the above  
regarding said order  
regarding yours  
regret to advise  
regret to inform  
regret to state  
replying to your favor of

said (the said regulation)  
same (regarding same)  
soliciting your advice  
soliciting your indulgence  
soliciting your patronage

take pleasure in



take the liberty of  
 thank you kindly  
 thanking you in anticipation  
 thanking you in advance  
 thanking you kindly  
 the writer  
 this is to acknowledge  
 this is to advise  
 trusting to have  
 trusting to receive same

ultimo (ult.)  
 under separate cover  
 up to this writing

valued favor  
 valued order  
 valued patronage

we are (ending last sentence)  
 we are pleased to advise  
 we are pleased to note  
 we have before us  
 we remain (ending last sentence)  
 we take pleasure in advising  
 we trust

w sh to advise  
 wish to state  
 with kindest regards  
 with reference to  
 with respect to your favor  
 with your kind permission  
 would advise  
 would state  
 would wish to

your esteemed favor  
 your esteemed order  
 your favor has come to hand  
 your future patronage  
 your kind indulgence  
 your letter of even date  
 your letter of recent date  
 your Mr. ———  
 your valued favor  
 your valued patronage  
 yours of even date  
 yours of recent date  
 yours duly received  
 yours kindly  
 yours with regard to above  
 yours with respect to same

### 3. *The Folly of Big Words*

*Gentle art of "Goozling."* Remembering that the aim of a business letter is to make a personal contact in the simplest way possible—using the words of every-day speech, and just *talking* to the reader—it can readily be understood how the purpose is defeated when the writer allows himself to be pompous or verbose. The gentle art of "goozling" may please the vanity of the man who is good at it, but it retards rather than speeds the effectiveness of his letters.

Do you ever "goozle"? Don't reply too quickly, as did a man in Kansas City who was attending a Letter-Clinic. He said: "You bet, I love to guzzle." "Goozle" is the word, not guzzle. You won't find it in the dictionary, but since it was invented by a college professor in Boston, its social standing is very good. New words, you know, are constantly forcing their way into our language, and we predict that "goozling" is here to stay. Certainly, it seems to describe a serious letter-writing fault as neatly as *any* word could.

"Goozling" is the language-habit of a "goozler." And what, you may ask, is he?



*Definition.* A "goozler" is one who never uses a short word if he knows a long one of the same or similar meaning. You encounter "goozlers" in all walks of life—politicians, preachers, novelists, commentators, toastmasters—yes, and *letter-writers*. He is harmless and often means well but others consider him an awful bore. Perhaps "goozling" is an obsession—a little bit of it leads to more and more. When the habit is in advanced stages the "goozler" may be so proficient in the use of imposing words that he, and he alone, can understand what he has tried to say. Even when the meaning is still vaguely discernible, the "goozler" has made such a spectacle of himself that few take him seriously.

Put this down as a truth for the writing of any kind of copy that seeks to influence human behavior—letters, advertisements, editorials, and all the rest—simple, *short* words do the best job. It may be great sport to "goozle," but it is not a pastime that gets results.

For example, not long ago an "ad" in one of the most popular magazines aimed to arouse interest in hats for men. At the top was the picture of a man and a girl in a dashing roadster. That was okay. The picture got attention, and of course the man was wearing one of the good-looking hats. He was glancing in the windshield mirror, and the first line of copy read: "Is that trooper following us with arresting intent?"

Do you ever call a traffic policeman a "trooper"? No, you might call him an "officer," but the chances are you would say, "cop." And if you feared that soon you would be halted at the curb, with a ticket coming up, would you ask the girl with you, "Are we being followed with *arresting intent*"? You would not. And do you think that artificial jargon would ever help to sell hats?

*"Goozling" in business letters.* Queer, isn't it, how folks can distort the King's English, once their minds are set to the job? Consider the following extracts from business letters—word for word as actually dictated and mailed.

"We have now heard from your doctor, and the condition which *necessitated operative procedure . . .*" Credit for this choice bit of "goozling" goes to the Claim Examiner of a big insurance company. Probably he meant the lady needed an operation.

"Realizing the obvious advantages of personal intercourse over this inadequate correspondence form, and truly conscientious in the belief that association would result in mutual benefit . . ." It seems that this applicant for a job was trying to say it would be much better to get together and talk things over.



"I desire to state at this time that this matter has been delayed because the insured has been in *continuous travel status*." Well, well—he must have been out of town for a while!

"It is requested and will be appreciated if as soon as this matter has been adjudicated, your company will *elucidate me in the premises*, in order that I may close my files in the case." Presumably this lawyer meant—oh, what's the difference—at least it is nice "goozling."

"We have carefully reviewed the file, and also additional information leads us to *adhere to the declination*." Does this personnel director mean by any chance that they must still say no?

Operative procedure . . . continuous travel status . . . elucidate me in the premises . . . adhere to the declination! Oh, what fun it is to "goozle."

"Our departure relates its recognized unique railroad operating approach to bond positions and securities via our advisory staff. We offer here a service unbounded to investment positions, a spaded diagnosis unobtainable from usual sources, and the cost should prove trivial to support the many complexed situations." Caution: do not read the above jaw-breakers aloud. Oh, yes, the quotation is from a *sales* letter.

"This interruption in our pleasant business relations causes great degree of concern, and we would like to take this occasion of renewing our endeavors of furnishing you again with your requirements in this line. We have valued very much the consideration and the patronage which you have extended in the past; and we *contemplate anticipatively the privilege of a continuance* in the very near future." This is another extract from a sales letter. The writer seems to want to ask—"How soon can we serve you again?"

"Enlighten us promptly relative to your ability to produce the foregoing and the time factor in view of enabling us to be conversant with the date upon which the delivery may be expected." This superb example of "goozling" originated in one of our governmental offices. Apparently, the writer wants to know how soon the order will be shipped.

It is really surprising how versatile a good "goozler" can be. Most Christmas letters are couched in simple words, as they should be, but this Subscription Manager could "goozle" as deftly for Santa Claus as for any other occasion. Isn't his letter sweet and pleasing?



May we express satisfaction in our confidence that your own experience leads you to agree that at this holiday season, we all have a very real basis for the traditional spirit of happiness and goodwill—a more genuine basis and more nearly up to par, than for several years past . . . especially in view of still better things in store.

We hope that the enclosed is excusably appropriate, in connection with the sentiments we express . . . Certainly it connotes a substantial contribution to the efficiency now requisite for prosperity.

But regardless of anything else, please accept our most sincere wishes for a prosperous and satisfactory year.

In the above light and merry holiday message, there is one sentence which stands out like a sore thumb. The writer deserves at least an "Oscar" for superlative "goozling." Read it again—"It connotes a substantial contribution to the efficiency now requisite for prosperity." Ho, hum! What fools we mortals be.

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Now, there *is* a mouthful of choice "goozling." It is doubtful if at the first reading you know what the writer had on his mind; the result is confusion—chaos—in your own. But we wouldn't for the world ask that you read again such a mumble-jumble of words. If you dug *deep* into that long sentence of overweight language, you



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*The best writers use short words.* Here is an experiment you will find most enlightening. Buy two magazines: one of the cheap, lurid variety, and the other of top rank. Remember that those who write for the cheap magazine are paid very little for a story, while those able to sell their efforts to the good magazine receive a high reward. Now, examine the language used in the two periodicals. Do you find any difference? Yes, indeed. The writer who gets very little for his efforts is the one who takes a wild fling with big words. The good writer is more discreet. Occasionally he may use a big word for a special effect, but on the whole he writes very simply. You see the best writers know the power of short words—and this is true of all kinds of copy—speeches, advertising, and letters.

This statement is made with no thought of slighting the value of a large vocabulary. Words are the writer's tools. The more he has of them in his kit, the better equipped he is to express various shades of meaning, but he never uses a word of many syllables unless there is a *reason* for it. He knows that he is talking to a human being—he wants his message to be easily understood, just as simple as he can possibly make it without the loss of vitality and interest. He is trying to place *thoughts* in the reader's mind, and avoid any confusion in their reception.

*Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.* You know how high in literature ranks the address made by Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg. It has been printed in all the major languages of the world, and many scholars say it is the most eloquent speech ever made by a President of the United States. And why? Well, not only is this address remarkable for its brevity, but it contains a great truth for those who aspire to influence human behavior or thought by the written or spoken word. Mr. Lincoln had a message to give to his audience. He wanted to make it as simple and direct as possible. He knew that the message would not be enhanced by spectacular phrases or empty-sounding words. He wanted those who were there that day to remember what he had said.

The address contained just 268 words. That alone should put to shame some of our modern politicians who love to break forth with long outbursts of "sweet wind," but of even greater significance is the fact that 196 of those words contained just one syllable. Furthermore, only 20 words in the speech had more than two syllables. In short, on that day Mr. Lincoln's percentage of one-syllable words was seventy-three plus—almost three words out of every four.



May we express satisfaction in our confidence that your own experience leads you to agree that at this holiday season, we all have a very real basis for the traditional spirit of happiness and goodwill—a more genuine basis and more nearly up to par, than for several years past . . . especially in view of still better things in store.

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Here is the lesson for letter-writers in that speech—keep *high* the percentage of one-syllable words.

*What about the letters Lincoln wrote?* Perhaps you are saying that nothing can be proved with only one example. You are wondering what the result would be if the same test were applied to Mr. Lincoln's correspondence. Well, that's a good question. Let's see. Following are quotations from his letters written during the War period. In analyzing the percentage of one-syllable words we will not count the names of people or places.

To General McClellan: Shield's division has got so terribly out of shape, out at elbows, and out at toes, that it will require a long time to get it in again.

(80% one-syllable words)

To General Hooker: If the head of Lee's army is at Martinsburg and the tail of it on the plank road between Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, the animal must be slim somewhere. Could you not break him?

(86% one-syllable words)

To General Mead: Do not lean a hair's breadth against your own feelings, or your judgement of the public service, on the idea of gratifying me.

(69% one-syllable words)

To General Grant: General Sheridan says, "If the thing be pressed I think that Lee will surrender." Let the thing be pressed.

(93% one-syllable words)

To Secretary of War: On this day Mrs. ——— called upon me. She is the wife of Major ——— of the regular army. She wants her husband made a brigadier-general. She is a saucy little woman and I think she will torment me until I have to do it.

(72% one-syllable words)

Omitting the nouns not counted, since Mr. Lincoln had no control over them, there are a total of 138 words in the above quotations from his letters. One hundred and nine are one-syllable words. Hence, a percentage of 78.9 is the "batting average," several points higher than that of the Gettysburg Address. Abraham Lincoln knew the power of simplicity. He *used short words*—and where in the record of human correspondence can you find letters of greater weight?

*Three letters in five words.* An amusing example of what short words can be made to do is filed at one of the large insurance companies. It seems that a policyholder had allowed his policy to lapse, so he got the form letter which endeavors to recover lost sheep. Being a polite fellow, but perhaps a busy one, the policy-



holder took a red pencil and answered the form letter with one word—"NO."

Entering in the spirit of the game, the dictator for the insurance company went back with two words—"WHY NOT?"

Once more the former policyholder rose to the occasion with a reply which is given to you with no regard for its political significance—"NEW DEAL."

No . . . Why not? . . . New Deal—three letters with a total of five words. Who can produce a better evidence of simplicity? Was it not Alexander Pope who wrote: "Words are like leaves; and where they most abound much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found"?

*The old-timer had the answer.* In the Beloit Daily News there once appeared an editorial which many a letter-writer could well afford to read twice. Here it is, in part.

They tell a story around newspaper offices of a very young and enthusiastic reporter who once dashed back to the city room after covering a spectacular fire.

He crouched over his typewriter, tense, prepared to turn himself loose with everything he had, almost overcome by the excitement which he was about to transmit to his expectant readers.

Feverishly, he rapped out a couple of words on the typewriter. He scowled at them, shook his head, and crossed them out. He tapped out two or three words on a fresh sheet, scowled again, and made a third start. He was fairly quivering with the excitement of this grand and dazzling story he had to write, and he was on the point of exploding because he could not seem to turn it into a narrative worthy of the occasion.

There sat watching him an old-timer, who had been writing big stories ever since the battleship Maine blew up in Havana harbor; and this old-timer presently came over to the eager cub and touched him on the shoulder.

"Just put down ONE LITTLE WORD AFTER ANOTHER," he advised.

"One little word after another!" There you have it—the secret which the most effective letter-writers have kept to themselves. At least, it must seem so, or why is this simple but sure-fire formula so often ignored? The big-word complex is still with us, and thousands and thousands of business letters continue to pay the penalty of lessened results.

*Your percentage of one-syllable words.* What if your letters were put under the microscope, as was done a moment ago with the address and letters of Abraham Lincoln? What is YOUR percentage



of one-syllable words? Probably you cannot answer that question because you never have thought to make the test, but it is extremely important that you do find out.

Take ten letters you have dictated recently. Make a random selection rather than one which might help to produce a favorable figure. You want to know the truth. Carefully count all the words, skipping only the proper names. Go back a second time, and count all the one-syllable words. Divide the larger sum (*all the words*) into the smaller sum (those of one syllable) and there you have it—your percentage.

This analysis may take a couple of hours—depending on the length of your ten letters—but it will give you a tangible idea of whether or not your letter-language is simple or “goozled.” There is no way of saying what the *exact* dividing line should be, but an analysis of many, many letters makes it reasonable to conclude that 70 per cent is close to the right figure. Letters with that percentage of one-syllable words, or higher, if not carried to the extreme, are usually easy to understand, and their chances of success enhanced. Letters with a lower percentage tend to be heavy and ineffective. Certainly, if your own test produces a figure of sixty or lower, you have a bad language-habit, and it is imperative that you begin to correct it. Your letters simply will not do the best job if handicapped with a cumbersome load of big words.

The finest letter-writers are critics of their own work. They take time off now and then to review the carbon copies of their own letters. They want to be sure—keep sure—that what they say is simple and direct. Moreover, they have a friendly, curious eye on the letters that pass over their desk. They keep folders of letters for various purposes—just as some people collect postage stamps or coins. From their collection they are often able to draw an idea to use in their own dictation. Letter-writing becomes a hobby as well as daily business—something vital and interesting rather than a necessary chore to be done.

This, perhaps, was the thought of the late newspaper man, Don Marquis, when he composed the rhyme:

Webster has the words and I  
Pick them up from where they lie;  
Here a word and there a word—  
It's so easy, 'tis absurd;  
I merely range them in a row,  
Webster's done the work you know;  
Word follows word, till, inch by inch,  
I have a column. What a cinch!  
I take the words that Webster penned  
And merely lay them end to end.



Right gay, isn't it? Newspaper writers generally lean on short words. You don't have to read a newspaper story twice to get the meaning. Do you suppose short words help to give this little rhyme zest and "oomph"? Let's give it the one-syllable-word-percentage test. Omitting "Webster" a proper noun, we have 63 other words, and only 6 are words of more than one syllable. 90 per cent is the answer. Once again we see it doesn't take a sledge hammer to drive a tack.

*Beware of long sentences.* Since the object of your business letter is to present your thoughts to the reader in a way that can easily be understood, common sense tells you that long and complicated sentences will defeat that purpose. Periods are like resting places spotted at frequent intervals on a difficult mountain path. They allow the reader to pause and grasp what *has* been said before he is asked to absorb something more. Sentences that run on like a babbling brook soon confuse the reader, and the confusion increases until at the end he cannot remember the beginning. Read the following sentence at normal speed, and judge if you clearly understand the thought when you finally reach the period.

We are willing to consider an extension of the arrangement to cover the other branches, but feel that such an arrangement should be made with the Doe organization, similar to the one at Reading, or if the Smith Grocery Company can suggest any definite ways in which they can give us special support and a substantial increase on their outside jobbing business, then we might be able to justify considering a joint arrangement to be made with the Doe organization and the Smith Company based on total purchases of the two combines, the agreement to be based on our being given distribution in all Doe stores, special push by store managers and employees, displays of our products in the stores, special featuring of them in the Doe newspaper advertising, and also special pushing and support by the Smith Company, including a showing of substantial increase in volume at each point over the corresponding period for the previous year, in return for which after the end of the year, we would remit to each branch giving us such support and showing such increase 5% on the net amount of their purchases.

This is not a sample merely constructed to prove a point. It was actually dictated one day by a business man who must have had great faith in the psychic power of the reader. To understand what the sentence says, an ordinary person would have to go back and take it apart, piece by piece. Finally, by dint of much effort, he might emerge with the meaning, but what right has any writer to impose such a task on the reader of his letter? Unless the reader were a member of the same organization, and *had* to decipher the



puzzle, the letter would surely be filed promptly, and with disgust, in the wastebasket.

If you think the above could never happen again, consider another sentence lifted from an actual business letter.

Now the item of October 21, which you show as the balance due you, is in order, but there is a reason for holding it up, and you are fully aware of the fact that this shipment of printing was prepared without our instructions and shipped to the customer, and you admitted that it was an error in your manufacturing department in getting these out before you had authority to proceed, and you will recall that the customer cancelled this order and sent us a new order, but unfortunately, you had already shipped it, and we have been trying to get the customer's permission to bill it and get him to use the order ever since shipment was made, and now we are passing the invoice through, giving the customer December 1 dating in order to get him to use the order, and we are dating your invoice as of December 1, which we trust is satisfactory and will take care of the item mentioned.

You see, once again there has been an attempt to cram into one stretch of thinking far more than the average human mind can take. Instead of dictating periods now and then so that the reader might consolidate what had been said, this business man dictated "and" . . . "and" . . . "and." Now, notice what these periods would have done.

The item of October 21, which you show as the balance due you is correct, but there is a reason for holding it up. You are fully aware that this printing was prepared and shipped to the customer without our instructions. You admitted that it was an error in your manufacturing department in getting the printing out before you had authority to proceed.

You will also recall that the customer cancelled the order, and sent us a new one. Ever since the shipment was made, we have been trying to get the customer's permission to bill it. Now we are giving him December 1 dating in order to get him to use the order. Hence, we are also dating your invoice December 1. This we think should be satisfactory to you.

With a few minor changes in wording, the periods have made the copy much easier to understand. The language is still more weighty than need be, but at least the reader has been given a fair chance of meeting the writer halfway. "The period," says Professor Robert Ray Aurner, Wisconsin University letter-master, "is the stop sign in the traffic control of thought. Learn to respect it exactly as you would a stop light in traffic."\*

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\* From Professor Aurner's book, *Effective Business Correspondence*; copyrighted 1939 by the South-Western Publishing Company, Inc.



*Neither of the two extremes.* Although you are told that long sentences, in proportion to their number and length, tend to reduce the effectiveness of a business letter, you should not be inspired to run amuck in the opposite direction, either. Sentences can be chopped up so drastically that a letter full of them moves along haltingly in a series of "huffs and puffs." Though you should not impose on the intelligence of your reader with sentences that run on and on like Old Man River, neither is it suggested that you approach your reader as if he were a moron. You frequently encounter business letters done in the style of a fourth-grade language book—an experience which is both dull and irritating. Furthermore, it must be remembered that some writers can compose long sentences which take the reader to the end with no confusion or loss of meaning.

After all is said and done, you must accept the suggestions in this Handbook with judgment and common sense, and avoid both extremes. You know that simplicity carries great power. You may attain it without the loss of color and personality which makes one letter stand out above the rest. What you are after is a certain "flow" of language which will carry your reader along *smoothly*, as a boat is carried by the current of a swift-moving stream. "Smoothly," is the key word. It is accomplished neither by sentences so short that the reader is jerked from one thought to another, nor by long spasms of expression which leave him without a clear understanding of the meaning.

#### *4. Use of Unnecessary Words*

*When the "sweet wind" blows.* For at least two reasons, it is foolish to use more words than are needed to convey the thought of a business letter. First, you know that letters cost money. It is pure waste to make them longer than they need to be—more words to dictate, more words to type, more wear on equipment. Second, verbose language is "sweet wind" that makes a letter spineless and ineffective. Many letter-writers blissfully waste words and know it not. Let us examine some of the more common forms of verbosity, so that you will not fall into the same traps. Read the following letter:

Will you please let us take this opportunity to congratulate you upon the opening of your new drug store. We wish it every possible measure of success, and we believe that with your unusual experience, integrity, reputation and business ability, it will even surpass your highest expectations.

It is also our desire to use this letter as an entering wedge, bringing to your attention the sixty or more well-known and effective



remedies of this company which have been on the market for thirty years and which have proven their merit. We want to serve you through your favored jobber and if you have not already stocked many of the Doe remedies, we shall be glad to make it to your advantage to do so. Give us the name of your wholesaler or jobber and we shall lend every effort toward serving you in the very best possible manner.

It gives us a great deal of pleasure to point out that Lone Wolf and Little Bear products are the best sellers, being especially good in meeting consumer requirements in each and every instance, and enjoying a ready sale. We beg to suggest that you take advantage of the ready sale of these items.

We are taking the liberty of enclosing our latest price list which gives you all the information you will require in ordering this profitable merchandise, and we assure you that at all times we hold ourselves in readiness to be of real service to you. We hope to be favored with your business.

When you have time to take a few minutes from the daily rush of business and its exacting requirements, we shall be glad to know how the store is progressing. May we call attention to the fact that your orders will receive our prompt and very best attention.

Perhaps at first reading even you did not realize how much this letter is padded with unnecessary words. The following revision is not changed in sequence of thought, and nothing of importance is left out. But the "sweet wind" has been red-penciled.

We congratulate you on the opening of your new drug store. We believe that with your experience and business ability, it will pass your highest expectations.

The sixty well-known and effective remedies of this company have been on the market for thirty years, and have proved their merit. If you already have not stocked many of the Doe remedies, we shall be glad to make it to your advantage to do so. Give us the name of your jobber, and we shall lend every effort toward serving you.

Lone Wolf and Little Bear products are the best sellers, being especially good in meeting consumer requirements. We suggest that you take advantage of their ready sale.

We are enclosing our latest price list which gives you all the information required in ordering this profitable merchandise. We ask to be favored with your business.

We shall be glad to know how the store is progressing. Your orders will receive our very best attention.

To be sure, the diluted version is still not a good sales letter, if you measure it as directed in Section 8. Nothing has been changed or



added to make it good, but most of the useless padding is gone. The two copies do the same job, poor as it may be—but there is one striking difference. The original letter contains 313 words, as compared to 162 words in the revised form. Thus, 151 words are blotted out as unnecessary—"sweet wind."

*Two insurance letters trimmed.* From a better letter bulletin distributed to employees by one of the big insurance companies, the following examples of verbosity are taken. The revisions were made by the correspondence supervisor.

"Reference to our records does not disclose that we have received the above numbered policy to be reissued, as requested in our letter of March 5. If you will please refer to the terms of this contract, you will note that it has been issued for a period of twelve months and, in view of this, since it is the desire of the insured to pay his premiums on a quarterly basis, it will be necessary that the present contract be returned for reissuance.

"We will appreciate hearing from you promptly in this regard, so that the proper adjustment may be made on our records."

"With reference to your letter of March 18, addressed to agent Doe, in connection with this policy, copy of which was forwarded this department, we wish to inform you that, in view of the fact that the agent is unable to locate the January 1st renewal of this policy, it will be necessary that the enclosed lost affidavit be executed by the agent, have it properly witnessed, and returned to this office so that we may have something on file accounting for this renewal.

"May we hear from you promptly, please?"

"May we have this policy at once? The contract has been issued for a period of twelve months, and since the insured now wishes to pay his premium quarterly, it will have to be reissued."

106 words in the "windy" original letter.

35 words as revised.

"Will you please ask the agent to execute the enclosed lost affidavit, have it properly witnessed, and return it to this office?"

"We need this for our files, as he is unable to locate the January 1st renewal.

May we have it soon, please?"

A saving of 47 words.

The above two letters as originally mailed can be indicted on three charges: (1) for "whiskers," (2) for "goozling," and (3) for "sweet wind." And the verdict? Guilty!



*The same letter at half the cost.* Always a leader in the fight for better letters in American business has been the Dartnell Corporation of Chicago. In one of the Dartnell bulletins appeared this very fine example of how a windy letter may be trimmed to do a better job. First, you will read the original, which the bulletin calls, "a good biography, but a costly letter to produce," and then the revision made by Cameron McPherson—"the same idea, better stated, in fewer words, at half the cost."

Dear Mr. Doc:

Please excuse me for writing you personally. It has been my experience that there are mighty few difficulties that cannot be overcome, mighty few differences that cannot be adjusted when the two parties sit down and talk things over.

I would love to walk into your store this morning and have a chat with you. I know you would greet me courteously and treat me fairly but since I can't see you personally, let's talk it over.

What I want to talk about is your account with the Eastern Specialty Company of \$125.00. Before I do so, however, excuse me please, while I talk for just a little bit about myself. I am living in New York but I am not a New Yorker. I am from "Down South" myself. I have traveled in every southern state; yes, I guess I have been in every southern county. I have made my home in the South, I have even followed a mule, plowing corn on an Alabama plantation. I have managed a commissary, have owned and operated my own retail business, in fact I have done pretty much the same thing you are doing, I know your business problems and your local conditions.

When your order was received, it was I who put O. K. on it—I have always insisted that the folks down south were sometimes poor, sometimes a little slow, but always honest.

Now I am in bad. The Company has sent you statements, they have written you letters, but so far they don't seem to be getting very far in collecting your account. Just what is the matter? Can't we get together? The Company wants to do the right thing by you and I wish you would look on me as your friend and believe me when I tell you that if there is anything you want done that is fair to good business principles, I am here to help you.

I would be mighty well pleased if you would send me a check by the next mail. If you can't pay all your account, send a part payment and see if we can't get everything fixed up. We will advertise for you if your goods aren't selling well; we will make an exchange for you if you have something that doesn't sell as well as some other item.

I am counting on your reply and I am sure you won't disappoint me.

Cordially yours,



Your first reaction to this long letter may not be unfavorable. The language is natural, and the approach of one southerner to another has some merit. But before you pass final judgment, compare the letter with Mr. McPherson's revision.

Dear Mr. Doe:

I am writing you personally because it has been my experience that there are mighty few difficulties that can't be adjusted when the two parties sit down and talk things over.

What I want to talk about is your account with the Eastern Specialty Company for \$125. It so happens that I am from "Down South" myself, and when your order came in, I put my O. K. on it without a minute's hesitation, because I know that the people down there are all right.

But now I am in bad because the company tells me that you haven't paid any attention to the statements and letters.

Let's get together on this. We'll meet you half way. If your goods aren't selling, we will advertise for you or make an exchange if you have some slow sellers.

At any rate, send me your check for \$50 by the 15th, if you can't send the full amount. Then we will see what we can do to help you get the rest.

Cordially yours,

There is just as much "meat" in the second letter as in the first, but the unnecessary trimmings have been scrapped. The southerner to southerner approach is still used, but without all the gory details. Moreover, because of its restraint, the second letter seems to carry a tone of sincerity which the first one lacked.

*Another example of "sweet wind."* There is no end to the verbose letters that could be cited to prove that they are far too common in business correspondence. Here's another of the same dreary vintage. The words in italics are those which pad the letter for no good reason.

Dear Mr. Doe:

Naturally we, *just as any other progressive manufacturer, strive for and much prefer bouquets and encomiums* to censure. But we welcome frank statements, *such as you have made and thank you for telling us exactly what you think of Egyptian quality.*

Particularly do we consider, *seriously*, your comments, because we know that *your schooling and reputation has been of such high standard that you could justifiably be and probably are recognized as an art critic of proved repute and renown.* As we understand it, you have designed and created for the most prominent New York



producers, among them, William Brady, Florenz Ziegfeld, the Theatre Guild, and have engaged in other masterful creative and designing works, too numerous to mention.

*It would be unnatural then, if your ideas in design were not of the highest possible expectancy. Incidentally, you have dealt with moneyed clients, where price was no object and was quite secondary to the creation of, and the desire to have and own something so different from the usual that even the ordinary layman would, at a casual glance appreciate the difference in cost and value.*

But Egyptian Lamps are *manufactured and designed* to occupy a place in the home of the man where price must of necessity be considered first, last, and all times. *There is a vast potential and found market for Egyptians as evidenced by sales, testimonials and statistics on average income.* We could not claim, however, that Egyptian Lamps would add to the *setting and beauty* of the Rockefeller, Morgan or Whitney mansions. *They would, we admit, be out of place.*

So, far be it from us to attempt *in any way* to sell you on the sales and customer satisfaction possibilities of Egyptians in your Miami Beach or New York studios. Neither can it be said that *our sales policy was high pressured or that we made claims which were exaggerated and unfounded.* . . . The only thing we can offer *at all* is that you return the Egyptians to our factory, *even though we have always been strict advocates of a non-consignment policy.*

Very truly yours.

Every day, in America, business letters are written that go around and around the mulberry bush, but this one really makes the circle so completely it is wondered the writer did not perish of exhaustion. Come, how much of the letter remains if we omit the italicized words?

Dear Mr. Doe:

Naturally, we prefer bouquets to censure. But we thank you for telling us exactly what you think of Egyptian quality.

Particularly, do we consider your comments because we know you have designed for the most prominent New York producers, too numerous to mention.

But Egyptian Lamps are designed to occupy a place in the home of the man where price must be considered first. We could not claim that Egyptian Lamps would add to the beauty of the Rockefeller, Morgan, or Whitney mansions.

So, far be it from us to attempt to sell you on the sales possibilities of Egyptians in your Miami Beach or New York studios. Neither can it be said that we made claims which were unfounded.



The only thing we can offer is that you return the Egyptians to our factory.

Very truly yours,

Remarkable, isn't it, how that very poor letter becomes almost a good one, when we simply remove the excess weight? Nothing was changed—nothing removed except a lot of excess words. The thought remains the same, but in a form much easier to take.

*Padded phrases used in business letters.* It is surprising how many over-stuffed phrases you will find in business correspondence, once you start to look for them. The cause may be the monkey-see monkey-do tendency of the human race to form little language habits which are shared by all—a simple device to avoid original thinking.

Why should a letter-writer speak of "*past* experience," or "*final* completion," or "the *month* of July"? The italicized words are *totally* unnecessary. All experience from which we form judgments is *past*. The completion of a project must be *final*. July is a *month*, and can be nothing else. Things unnecessary must be *totally* so.

And here are some more of the padded phrases so often used in business letters:

It came *at a time* when we were busy.  
Leather depreciates *in value* slowly.  
During *the year* of 1947.  
It will cost *the sum* of one hundred dollars.  
At a meeting *held* in Philadelphia.  
We will ship these shoes *at a later date*.  
In about two weeks' *time*.  
The mistake *first* began due to a misunderstanding.  
A *certain* person by the name of Bill Jones.  
The *close* proximity of these two incidents.  
It happened *at the hour* of noon.  
We see some good in both *of them*.  
*In the city* of Columbus.  
The body is made *out* of steel.  
During *the course* of the campaign.  
*Perhaps* it may be that you are reluctant.  
Our uniform *and invariable* rule is.  
Somebody *or other* must be responsible.  
We are now *engaged* in building a new plant.  
*By means* of this device we are able.  
The radio sells *at a price* of \$200.

Read the above lines without the italicized words—nothing has been lost in meaning or effectiveness. Hence, those words must be unnecessary. On and on we could go with similar examples—



*over-stuffed phrases which have become habitual in oral and written speech.*

*The inelegant habit of "doubling."* Remember the story of the man who read the directions given by his doctor, "Take one pill every three hours"? He promptly doubled the dose on the assumption that if one pill was good for him, two would be twice as beneficial. Perhaps it is the same reasoning that impels some writers to "double" in their letters. They think that if one word does the job, two should do it better. So they dictate, "it is *evident* and *apparent* that our position is *just* and *fair*," or "we *insist* and *demand* that this bill be paid." In their minds, the use of the *two* words gains added emphasis, but the truth is that they drag out the thought and tend to make it *less* effective.

This practice of "doubling" can do no good in any kind of writing. The man who aims to make his letters simple, direct, and persuasive should avoid a habit so easily acquired and so hard to break. Consider the following New Year letter.

My dear Mr. Smith:

Out of the fullness of a warm heart . . . I want to extend to you and yours my *sincere* and *earnest* good wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

The last few years have taught us many lessons . . . the *first* and *foremost* being a new understanding of life's values . . . to *appraise* and *determine* what after all are the really worth while things.

Topping the list on such an inventory are our friends . . . acquired through *experiences together* and *contacts* in a civic, business and a social way . . . with a record in review of their *deeds*, *actions* and human qualities.

I am happy to have your name on my list of such friends.

May I express the hope that you, like many others, are approaching the New Year with a feeling of *optimism* and *encouragement*.

Cordially yours,

Queer, isn't it, how the writer "doubled" in a vain effort to stress his sentiments.

Sincere and earnest.

First and foremost.

Appraise and determine.

Experiences together and contacts.

Deeds and actions.

Optimism and encouragement.

But before you condemn this one man too severely—he may have let the spirit of the New Year inflate his letter-language—examine



the correspondence that comes over your desk. You will surely find thousands of similar examples. Like this collection letter—a nasty thing, and full of “doubling”!

Dear Sir:

We *refuse* and *decline* to have further expense writing you letters. We take position (“whisker”) you have treated us in an *unjust* and *unfair* manner.

Therefore, be *advised* and *informed* we have legal rights in a matter of this kind. We assume you are aware of the action we can take if this matter is not completed *at once* and *by return mail*. Therefore, *without further delay* you are *to immediately* and *at once* pay for these goods.

We are not interested in any *excuses* or *alibis*. We *demand* and *insist* that the matter be completed at once. We will expect your remittance within one week of the date of this letter.

We have been *fair*. We have been *reasonable*. In return, we have not had what we consider the *right* and *proper* consideration from you. If the conditions were reversed, how would you like to be treated as you have treated us?

We are marking our records the matter will be settled within one week. We will not assume any *obligation* or *responsibility* for any action taken if there is any delay. You will therefore see to it that remittance is sent to us at once.

Very truly yours,

Obviously, this letter has many faults beyond the one of “doubling.” The tone is rude, if not insulting. The emphasis is on the company rather than the reader—four of the five paragraphs start with “We,” and many of the sentences. Yes, a nasty thing, and not the kind that gets results, as you will find in Section 15, devoted to Credit and Collection Letters.

*How long should a letter be?* In urging the use of concise language in your business letters, there has been no intention of setting up any exact limitation with respect to the length of the conversation you may have with your reader. When Abraham Lincoln was asked how long a man’s legs should be, he replied “long enough to reach the ground.” If you should ask how long a business letter should be, the answer is “long enough to do the job.” The use of unnecessary words is pure waste. The inflation of a letter with “sweet wind” is another form of lost motion. Every letter problem has its own set of facts and conditions. To omit anything which might help a letter to accomplish its purpose is obviously a mistake; to drag a letter out longer than it needs to be is just as unwise.



Brevity is commendable if your letter covers all of the ground that needs to be covered. Just what that ground is, you must decide, remembering that a lengthy letter tends to increase the hazard that the reader may become tired and leave you "waiting at the church."

In some companies the false notion exists that no letter should be longer than one page. Sometimes that is even made obligatory. You will agree the notion is absurd. Certain sales letters, for example, could not possibly do a good job in one page. The only safe rule to follow is that you handle your subject with restraint and caution, and resist the temptation to run wild with points of no real importance to your reader. As you will discover in the next section of this Handbook, a letter of any consequence deserves analysis of the facts which make it necessary—the selection of those points that should be treated, and *how* it is best to present them. Good letters are *planned* before they are written. And if that plan can be carried out in a short letter, fine! If it takes several pages, then let your letter be long. *Do the job. Do it right.* The length is inconsequential.

A friend once wrote to the Radio Editor of a Chicago newspaper. He delivered a long tirade against something the editor had written. Promptly, he received this reply, "Sorry! We'll try to do better." That was a very short letter which did the job neatly.

The president of an oil company in Texas wrote a letter to one of our large corporations, complaining about what he thought to be an unfair sales practice. The reply came back, signed by an official of the corporation, "You have been misinformed. We do not sell as you have outlined in your letter." That short letter did a very poor job. The president of the oil company resented the curt dismissal of his complaint. He deserved a more detailed explanation presented in a more courteous manner. He was a potential customer of the corporation but his goodwill was lost.

A letter soliciting subscriptions to *Fortune* runs four pages. Another of the same length tries to interest young men in taking a correspondence course in hotel management. Both of these letters do a complete sales job. They were four pages long because they *had* to be. After all, the length of your letter depends on the nature of the particular problem. You can be too brief—you can be too "windy." Good judgment determines what must be said. Certainly there are language faults that stretch a letter longer than is necessary. You have seen what some of them are. Avoid them.

*A lady tries a business letter.* Perhaps, even in a serious book, it is permitted that we pause now and then to enjoy a lighter moment.



Here is a letter longer than it needs to be. The lady who wrote it was following as best she could her husband's instructions.

Dear Sirs:

I really don't know how to start this little note. I'm just a young bride of a month or so—thirty-three days, nine hours and twenty minutes to be exact—and I've never written a business letter before. I tried to get my husband to write this last night, but he said I had to start to learn how to do these things sometime, and I might as well begin now. . . . Excuse me just a moment; there's someone at the door. . . . It was nothing of importance; just a man selling vegetables.

I don't know why I am telling you all this, except that when I told my husband I didn't know the first thing about writing a business letter, he told me to sit down and write it exactly as if the person to whom I was writing was right here and I was talking to him. Naturally, if you were right here and someone came to the door, I would have to excuse myself, so that's why I said, "Excuse me" in this note, in case you are wondering why I said "Excuse me." My husband also told me that one of the most important things about writing a letter was to put each thought, or idea, in a separate paragraph, so I'll start a new paragraph now.

Please send me the pink decorative shield for my telephone that I bought in your store, instead of the blue one delivered to me.

Yours very truly,\*

Well, the lady's husband had some good ideas about how a business letter should be written, but the execution was questionable. It is hoped you do not have a similar experience in using the ideas presented in this Handbook.

## 5. *Other Language Faults*

*Use of word pets.* Letter-writers, like other craftsmen, must guard constantly against falling into ruts. There is always the danger of growing stale, so that what you write lacks the desired color and originality. Nothing contributes more to such a lamentable condition than to acquire a number of word pets—words that you use over and over again until they become so habitual that you do not realize how cut-and-dried your dictation sounds. Mention this fault to almost any secretary, and her eyes will twinkle as she thinks of certain words and phrases which she types day after day in the letters of her "boss."

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To be sure, it may be unimportant that the girl who types the letters is bored by these repetitions, but customers, too, may feel their deadly monotony.

*He was still "glad to say."* The above brings to mind the rather amusing case of a clerk who wrote many letters daily for one of our large shoe manufacturers. Somewhere in his business career he had been impressed with the fact that every letter should start on a cheerful note, so he had fallen into the habit of leading off with, "We are happy to tell you." This was bad enough even in those letters where the introduction jibed with the rest, but it was especially vicious when the news that followed was unwelcome. A check of his carbon copies one day brought to light the following rather startling assertions.

We are happy to tell you that the shoes you ordered for your Easter Sale will not be ready to ship until a month later.

We are happy to tell you that we cannot allow credit for the shoes you returned.

You can imagine how the customers getting these two letters must have exploded to meet such happiness over their bad luck. A more extensive check of the clerk's correspondence revealed that "We are happy to tell you," was a language pet he never failed to take for a walk. Good news or bad news got the same introduction—he was always happy to hand it out.

*Word pets in an insurance company.* A review of letters used by an insurance company also brought to light word pets not so destructive as the shoe man's pride and joy, but just as tiresome to read. One of them was "out of suspense" and another, "held in abeyance." It was surprising how many things—claims, policies, letters—were either coming out, or still held in. Files, too, were beloved in this company. Here is one of the letters:

We are trying to close as many of our pending *files* as we can. If the above case is now closed, we would appreciate your returning the *file* so that we may close our pending *file*, or bring before us such information as will place our *file* up-to-date.

"Our records" and "your records" also got a great play in the letters of that insurance company. "According to our records, the grace period will expire next Monday," one letter would say, and the next, "The enclosed copy is for your records." But "records" are necessary in any company, and why can't they be taken for granted? Wouldn't the job be done just as well, or much



better, by simply saying, "The grace period will expire next Monday," or "The enclosed copy is yours"? Customers have no special interest in the records you keep—but they are interested in the information supplied from them.

"We await your advice, with every good intention," was the ancient language pet of another writer. Every letter where a reply was expected closed in the same dismal way. Another benevolent correspondent was very fond of signing off with, "Thanking you kindly, and with best wishes," even though the part that came before was quite often blunt and domineering.

*A lawyer favors time.* Of course we understand that lawyers are trained to speak with caution. But this one in Wisconsin seems especially diffident as he leads his "pet" by the leash.

I sincerely regret to advise that I do not feel that I am in just the position at the *present time* to make you the report as to the enclosed, for certain reasons. However, it may be at some *future time* I may be in the position to make such a report, and as aforesaid, I regret indeed just at the *present time* I really do not feel in the position to give you the requested information for certain reasons, that I would prefer not to state, just at the *present time*.

You might call that lawyer "time-minded," from the way he toys with the word. He also has another favorite word combination, "in the position."

*This one should end, "Splittingly yours."* From a company in New York, you get the following example of word repetition.

We are sorry that the roll is not satisfactory for the reason that it *splits*.

In this connection, we examined the sample, and find that same *splits*. On this heavy weight it is impossible to guarantee it not to *split* to some extent. We can ship you another roll, but it is possible that it would *split* too. The reason is that it is so thick and has a tendency to *split*.

However, it may be that another roll may not *split*. Does the entire roll *split*? You may of course return the roll if you find this *split* throughout.

He had a little pet named Split.

*Word pets may indicate limited vocabulary.* Many writers use the same words or combinations forever because they are in a rut and are too lazy to climb out of it. Others have slipped into the groove without realizing it. Certain writers are forced into the habit by a limited vocabulary. Members of this last group may know only



one word for various shades of meaning, whereas you might have a separate word to match each shade.

For example, you know that *flowers* have *fragrance*, that *cigars* have *aroma*, that *perfumes* have *scent*, that *gases* have *odor*—but to the man whose vocabulary is small, all of these things might simply *smell*. If he wanted to describe an especially disagreeable odor, you know the word he would use. Yes, it “stinks.” Sometimes, you hear people of great education and social standing use the same word to describe a play, or a book, or a song, but it seems a pity that those who know better should be so careless.

It is the man with the limited vocabulary to whom lips are *ruby*, teeth are like *pearls*, and the party a *howling* success. If he is a business man, he may write about the *cordial* invitation, the *stirring* speech, or the *painstaking* effort to improve a product. You can’t very well criticize folks who do the best they can with what they have, nor should you expect their letters to be as colorful and interesting as are the letters of those who can draw on a comfortable vocabulary account.

A limited vocabulary is *not* a hopeless handicap, however. If you feel that yours is too small, you *can* make it bigger. Fifteen to thirty minutes a day devoted to vocabulary building will produce amazing results in a year. For reference, any good dictionary will do, and Roget’s Thesaurus will serve as a textbook. Reading books, magazines, and newspapers, with an eye for any word which you do not understand, is also very helpful. Once you have mastered the meaning and spelling of a new word, *use* it a sufficient number of times to make it a permanent part of your vocabulary. This may sound like a lot of work, but nothing worth while comes easy. When you see your word-chest filling up, the study will become more of a pleasure than a chore. Your letters will take on new life and vitality. Just as a carpenter would be handicapped without an adequate number of tools, so will you always be hindered without an ample and flexible vocabulary.

*Avoid red-pepper words.* The power of a single word to ruin a business letter is well known to the experts. Sometimes, the trouble-maker is obviously ill-chosen—as when a collection letter insinuates the reader is a dead-beat or a chiseler—but often it may appear innocent until the psychology of its use is understood. The collection letter might say, “So far you have ignored our bills and letters.” That doesn’t appear at first thought to be a tactless statement, but it does carry the insinuation that the reader is one who *ignores* his obligations. In the same way, “We have not had the *courtesy* of a reply,” insinuates that the reader is discourteous. Either of the two words is humiliating in proportion to the thickness



of the customer's skin. Why disparage a man when trying to appeal to his better self?

Even the harmless little word "should" may arouse an undesirable reaction in your reader's mind. As children, most of us have been told thousands of times what we *should* or *should not* do. Our parents and our teachers have used the word to imply that we were falling short of the expected standard of performance. "Johnny," said the customer's mother, "you *should* know better than to track mud into the house"—and then years later you come along and say to the same man, "John Doc, you should know better than to ask for this unearned discount."

There are many similar words—okay if used cautiously, but little atomic bombs when they tend to irritate through some thoughtless insinuation. Remember always in your letter-writing—never use a word that might humiliate or belittle the reader.

*Examples from business letters.* We couldn't begin to list all of these red-pepper words. You must constantly be on guard against them as they have a way of sneaking into a letter, and then popping up to cause trouble. Here are a few more examples taken from actual business letters.

"We do not understand your *failure* to pay this bill." The insinuation is that the customer cannot be trusted to meet his obligations. Moreover, "failure" is a negative word. We want our name and actions associated with success.

"Your *complaint* about the damaged shipment of flour will have our careful attention." Thus, you say the reader is one who "complains." He dislikes the insinuation. This word should be banned from business letters. There need be no Complaint Department; "Adjustment" Department is better. "Customers' Service" Department is tops.

"We have your letter in which you *claim* two cases of spoiled peas were included in the shipment." When you use "claim" in this sense, you are really insinuating, "You say it is so, but we have our doubts."

"Frankly, we are *surprised* to see you take this attitude after we have tried so hard to please you." You feel very much abused, and the customer is a "son of a sea-cook." Of course, your "surprise" is humiliating.

"It seems *strange* that no other customer has mentioned this fault in our product." You are implying that this one customer is unreasonable, or he would climb on the band wagon with all the others.



## BUSINESS LETTER LANGUAGE

"We didn't think you were the *type* to misunderstand our intentions." You mean you didn't think so before, but you do now. Who wants to be a "type" anyway?

"There will always be leaders and *plodders* on our sales force, although I would much rather see every man a big success, and making lots of money." That's sweet of you, Mr. Salesmanager, but the salesman who read your letter was far down the line—one of the "plodders."

"You can't *fairly* blame us for the railroad's carelessness." His letter did blame you. He said your shipping cases were too light. Therefore, you have called him "unfair."

"Certainly, you *know* that we did not offer you any such concession." Well, he told you that you did. He must be a "bald-faced liar."

"This corrects the *mistake you made* in the amount of the check due us." Why remind anyone of his "mistake"? Help him save face with, "This balances your account, and thanks for your cooperation."

"In years past, you *used to be* one of our most loyal customers." The good old days are gone; if he "used to be" loyal, then he isn't any more.

"At *least*, we think we are *entitled* to know why you have stopped buying." Get out your crying towel. The customer isn't treating you right. The very least he could do would be to explain his peculiar conduct.

"It appears that you are *disgruntled* about the remark made by our clerk, but surely *you can't expect* us to know what goes on every minute in our store." Your customer is easily disgruntled. He should be more considerate, the old bear!

"*Please understand*, that *we* are still willing to meet you halfway." Not only are you "bossy" with "please understand," but you also insinuate the customer is not a good sport. *We* are still willing (see the pretty halo), but he is not.

"*Others* continue to buy and make money on our goods, while you still *procrastinate*." The comparison does not favor the prospect. "Others" are smart, but he is dumb. What could be expected of one who puts things off—a "procrastinator"?



"Come, let's end this *childish* argument." A fighting word. You will never end an argument by calling the other fellow "childish."

"Your order was shipped in twenty-four hours. We try to give the same fast service to a *small* buyer, as we would to a large one." What a lucky peewee he is to be served by a company so big-hearted. The insinuation is that the customer's business doesn't amount to much.

"Although we could *ethically* deny your request, you may return the goods." A humiliating sentence—"ethically" is the stinger. The implication is that he was *not* ethical in making the request.

"Do you *fumble* the sales inquiries that come your way?" Who admires a "fumbler"? The question is insulting.

"We have the answer to your heating *problem*." This is a common beginning in sales letters, and a bad one. Taking for granted that he *has* a "problem" is irritating.

"You can't keep up with competition, using *antiquated* methods and equipment." The company using this letter sold only equipment but the writer for good measure included methods in the slam. You may think a customer is "antiquated" but keep the secret to yourself.

The above examples which show how to destroy goodwill by one or two words are by no means exceptional; you see them frequently in business letters. They are not intentional, but they bore deep, and never fail to irritate.

*One word spoils this letter.* The tone of the following letter is not bad. The writer is trying to remain friendly, even though the debt is old. But there is one insinuating word—a thoughtless dash of red-pepper.

Supposing a man owed you a few dollars, and they were long past due. What would you do about it?

Would you threaten to sue him? Would you assume he was a deadbeat? Would you put him on your blacklist, so that hereafter all orders would be shipped C.O.D.?

I don't know what to do about your account, because when one gets as old as yours, some action has to be taken.

You've been a mighty good customer of ours, so we don't want to do anything drastic; at least, until we hear from you. But we must ask that you do something about clearing up this balance at once.



If there is a red-pepper word in that letter, you would expect to find a quick reference to it in the customer's reply. And that was the first sentence! "Surely by this time you must know that we are NOT *deadbeats*." Yes, out popped that provoking word—and there was trouble.

When "*policy*" is used as an excuse. Probably the word most frequently used in denying requests is "*policy*." It is literally worked to death. "We regret to advise that it is not our policy to ship in less than case lots" . . . "Please excuse us, but a policy of long standing in our company makes it impossible to go along with you" . . . "Our policy is well understood by the trade, and we can make no exceptions." Some business men take this easy way of hiding, behind a word.

Policy means nothing to a customer unless the *reason* for it is understood. Merely to say that you cannot do something because a policy prevents is both irritating and inadequate. Although policy may be logical, your reader is entitled to an explanation. This involves more thought in writing the letter but there is no other way to satisfy the reader and retain his goodwill. If the policy won't stand explanation, it is only a subterfuge—as the reader will think when you hide behind it.

The problem of avoiding these red-pepper words is largely psychological. The best solution is to put yourself in the place of the reader, and to contemplate his possible reactions in the light of what your own would be. The letter-writer who holds to the Golden Rule will seldom use an irritating word.

Should slang be used in business letters? You can ask, "How much is two times two?" and the answer is "four." It is the only answer, final and absolute. But ask, "Is slang permissible in business letters?" and the answer is, "It all depends,"—which is no more satisfactory than to call a girl on the telephone, ask for a date, and get the same reply.

Webster defines slang as: "Originally, cant of thieves, gypsies, beggars, etc.; now, language consisting either of new words or phrases, often of the vagrant or illiterate classes, or of ordinary words or phrases in arbitrary senses, and having a conventional but vulgar or inelegant use; also, the jargon of a particular class."

That slang was originally the "cant of thieves, gypsies, and beggars," is interesting, if not complimentary. In modern times, however, the use has spread in far wider circles; slang is now encountered in the speech and writing of all classes. When used with discretion and good taste, it may often add color and interest. Only when writers *lean* on slang for the lack of an adequate vocabulary, or when they use it in a misguided effort to be clever, does it



become objectionable. Moreover, since our language is alive and constantly growing, a slang word of today may tomorrow be found in the dictionary as acceptable.

*Opinion of an expert.* James C. Fernald, author of several books on grammar, had this to say about slang.\*

It should be said that among the multitude of slang words and phrases, there are in each generation a few that meet a real need of the language, and win their way to acceptance. Dean Swift, in 1750, objected to the words *sham*, *banter*, *bubble*, *mob*, and *shuffle*, all of which have become approved English. . . .

When a slang word or phrase is vigorous and expressive, when it meets a real need of the language, it will gradually be adopted by the educated classes; at first in quotation marks, or with some saving clause, such as "to use a common phrase," "so to speak," or the like. Then at length, with all marks of quotation or apology removed, it will take its place as accepted English. Because our language is alive, it is susceptible of change. It is only the dead languages, like the Latin or the classic Greek, that are fixed and unchangeable.

But the burden of proof is always against the slang expression. Let it be put on probation before it is admitted into good society. Make sure that there is a real need for that word or phrase. If it has genuine merit, it will not be hurt by objection and criticism, while our caution will save our language from the inroad of a host of worthless adventurers.

The safe rule is: that slang is never to be used except with care and intent, knowing it to be slang, believing it to be expressive for the immediate purpose, and when no better word or phrase equally forcible can be substituted.

So there you have the "pro and con" for slang, about as well as it could be stated. If you think a slang word or phrase—not vulgar or inane—will help your letter, go ahead, use it. But watch carefully that the practice does not become a habit in which you spread slang all over the page. An overdose of slang makes many a letter a joke, and a nincompoop of the writer.

*Some slang expressions better than others.* You will agree that there are many breeds of slang, and they don't all rate the same kennel. Phrases like "on the spot," or "out on a limb," or "take my hair down," are both useful and natural.

"Joe, I am sorry if this report puts you *on the spot*, but we just must have it by Tuesday."

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"It's this way, Mr. Graham. I personally O.K.'d an open shipment of this order, and now with the bill still unpaid, I am out on a limb."

"John, there is no need of kidding ourselves about your sales record this year. But in the past, you were always a winner. So, why don't you *take your hair down* and tell me what's wrong?"

Each of those slang phrases helped to make the language more interesting and natural. They are phrases commonly used in speech, and thus they tend to create the man-to-man effect you are after. They are not vulgar or inelegant. These words stir the imagination and create a mental picture which formal language could not achieve in so few words.

But, there are slang words which make a business letter sound like a schoolboy's note to a friend.

You failed us, and, By Golly, we had so much faith in you too! We were sure and confident that YOU, of all people, would keep your word.

To be perfectly frank, we feel "kinder" blue about it. And that's why we are writing this personal letter, so you will understand how we feel.

But you can cheer us up—and here's how: Send your remittance NOW.

I'll be a holy Pink Toe'd Prophet if I don't believe you have forgotten me entirely.

Gosh! I surely would be happy if you'd send me a little change to sort of renew your account and relieve me of a few financial burdens. Honest, I need some help, so be a good sport and loosen up a bit.

The entire amount is \$15.40. All or any will help. Thanks.

Can I have it right away, please?

In both of these letters, the writers were trying for a tone of personal cordiality. Like the golfers who press for distance and dub their shots, they tried too hard. Words such as "Golly" and "Gosh" just don't seem to belong in the vocabulary of grown-ups, especially of business men. A prophet with pink toes may be a spectacular fellow, but you would expect to find him in a storybook for children, not in a business letter. Equally distasteful are such distortions as "kinder," "sorta," and "wotta"—which we had better hand back to the thieves, the gypsies, and the beggars, in case they could ever use them.



Samples of the more inelegant slang words are "lousy," "nuts," and "guts." These may have a place in a salesmanager's letter to his men, or in a letter to a friendly dealer who favors that kind of talk. Usually such slang is dangerous, because you never know whom it may offend. Thus, you are better off not to use it. As Mr. Fernald wrote, "The burden of proof is always against the slang expression." Keep to the safe side. Use slang cautiously; when in doubt—*don't*.

*Profanity out in business letters.* It is hardly possible to think of any situation where profanity will improve a business letter. This is so obvious that the question of its use needs no discussion. The answer is NO. Admitting there may be many times when you *feel* the need of a healthy cuss-word in writing to a cantankerous customer or a lazy salesman, you can't afford to yield to the temptation. Let's keep our letters clean.

Perhaps worse than the cuss-words are the attempts to soften their shock that we see in business correspondence—"Wotinhel" for "*What in hell*," or "*Heluva*" for "*Hell of a*," or others of the same breed. This is a childish way of fooling nobody.

Taboo profanity. There are plenty of chances for it—without soiling your letters.







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## SECTION

# 3

## BUSINESS LETTER CARPENTRY

### *1. Charting the Flight*

*Before the letter comes the plan.* Anything worth while in life or business deserves to be *thought* before it is done. As one popular sales slogan goes, "Plan the work, then work the plan." Certainly, a leap in the dark seldom lands you on the desired spot. It is much better to *see* first where you are leaping.

Only routine, repetitive actions can be carried out without a plan, and even they required intelligent direction in the beginning. The reward for repetitive work is usually meager. The bonus is found where there are problems to solve, and is awarded to those able to think them through. Everything important to business must be planned. Advertising is planned. Products are planned. Sales are planned. Production is planned. Policies are planned. And letters, too, are planned in those companies where an honest effort is being made to avoid waste, and to gain the best possible results.

*Not like the grasshopper.* Unfortunately, there are still men in business who are "too busy" to do an intelligent letter job. Their chief aim is to dictate as much as possible in a given period of time. You hear one of them say proudly, "I got rid of one hundred letters today." He does not realize that he might better have served his company by dictating fifty letters with more thought about their purpose and how to accomplish results. These slam-bang dictators are like grasshoppers—good on distance but hell on direction. It is much more commendable to plan and write ten collection letters which bring back four thousand dollars, than to dash off twenty collection letters which bring back only two thousand dollars. Which is more valuable to your company, a sales letter which pulls twenty per cent in orders, even if you took a day to plan and write it, or a sales letter dashed off in fifteen minutes which pulls only two per cent?

What if you were a salesmanager and had to announce a cut in commission rate? By hard thinking you might be able to write the letter which would satisfy your salesmen that the cut was necessary



and fair to them; or you could just hand out the bad news with no regard for their point of view, and let them figure out for themselves why the cut had been made. The second letter would take less time to write, but would it be better? No, a salesmanager always has the problem of keeping morale at a high pitch. He would surely take time to write the letter which might cushion the shock.

*Relation of time to importance.* Often when a group of business men are reminded that letters must be planned, one of them will exclaim, "That may be true theoretically, but it wouldn't work with me. If I took time to plan every letter I dictate, I couldn't do anything else." This fellow is really not thinking very straight. Nobody intends that he should go into mental contortions over every letter that he writes. Many of the situations handled by correspondence are so similar that one approach serves for all. Others are so simple in nature that they present no real problem. It takes very little planning to write to a customer, thanking him for his order, and telling when it will be shipped. Of course, you might think of something else to add that would warm the customer's heart, and lead to another order—and that extra planning would surely be worth-while. Even when letter-problems are more complicated, experience is a big help. The planning of one successful letter develops a certain skill and understanding that carries over to the next. Thus, if each day you take time to *think* before you write, the job tends to be less and less difficult. You grow in power. Eventually, you become a letter-craftsman, and the steps you take to plan your letters are not nearly so hard as they were when you were still struggling to master the art.

The time one can afford to give to planning a letter depends, basically, on the nature of the problem, and how important it is to the company that the perfect solution be found. For example, the promotion manager of a western corporation recently mailed a sales letter which in a very short time brought in orders amounting to over three hundred thousand dollars. When complimented, he said: "It was no miracle. I simply had to sweat blood on the letter to get every word right. I did nothing else for ten days but work on it—couldn't sleep for thinking about it. You see, I *took time to make sure* the letter would do the job."

The letter-writer just quoted is one of America's best. He works as deftly as a surgeon and his output of copy is far above average, for he dictates very rapidly. In preparing that one sales message, however, he made no attempt to hurry. Instead, he was willing to sweat blood for ten days—"to make sure the letter would do the job." Each of those days spent in planning paid back to his company more than thirty thousand dollars' worth of new business.



Learn to rate your pace. Give each letter-problem the time and attention it deserves. A little planning for little problems! Big planning for big problems! But plan . . . plan . . . plan.

*The first step.* Knowing exactly what you mean to accomplish is the first step in planning a business letter. Obviously, unless this *purpose* is crystal-clear in the writer's mind, it will be no better in the reader's. Confusion breeds nothing more orderly than itself.

No doubt you have received letters that read well enough, but when you got to the end, you said, "Well, so what?" And that's a good name for letters that take you no place—"So what" letters. Reading them is like holding the bag in a snipe-hunt—nothing happens. Millions of dollars are wasted every year with letters which seem to have no clearly defined purpose. Apparently, nothing is expected of the readers—at least, nothing is asked. A good example is the one which follows. It was intended to be a sales letter, probably, but no order was requested. Or was the thought merely to keep the company name before the reader? We don't know. Maybe the writer was just as nonplussed.

Dear Sir:

It may be hot—

when you read this letter, so we'll make it short and comfortable. We won't omit sending it, because that would be just like missing a friendly call.

Maybe you'll be "in conference" when this letter reaches you. Along about this time of the year, many big business men are.

But if you stick around long enough, you'll find them coming back with a bag of clubs.

Which is perfectly all right! American business men have found it pays to play—as well as work. It's a good habit, although it would have been frowned on fifty years ago when this business of making boxes was first founded.

Times do change. And habits too. But the fundamental principles of success don't.

A good product—in our case, Boxes—Cartons—Containers—a sincere Service, and courtesy to the customer always—insures Success.

We've found it so!

Cordially yours,

The letter has a few points in its favor. The language is natural—no "whiskers." The words are short, so that the flow is fast—no "goozling." The mention and approval of golf as the business



man's relaxation may rub a "soft spot" and thus tend to bring reader and writer together. There's a very gentle plug for the boxes and service, but just when you would expect a request for reader action, the writer signs off.

"We've found it so," says the writer.

"So what?" asks the reader.

*Another "so what" letter.* As you will discover later in this section, a good story may help to get a letter off to a good start. It serves as an appetizer, and whets the reader's taste for the "meat" which is to follow. But here's a letter which is *all* appetizer—no soup, no meat, no vegetables, no salad, no dessert. True, the writer finally slaps on a postscript in which there is a very mild request for business. Was that the primary purpose he had in mind, or was it merely to amuse his customer? If the latter, the story might backfire, for puzzles can be irritating unless they are easily solved by the customer.

Dear Mr. Doe:

There were three men on their way to a Kentucky Derby named Taylor, King, and Jones, who are an attorney, a salesman, and an adjustor, but not respectively.

On the train with them were three credit men: a Mr. Taylor, a Mr. King, and a Mr. Jones.

#### CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

1. Mr. King lives in New York.
2. The attorney lives halfway between Chicago and New York.
3. Mr. Jones earns \$4000 a year.
4. Taylor beat the salesman at poker.
5. The attorney's nearest neighbor, one of the credit men, earns exactly three times as much as the attorney who earns \$2500 a year.
6. The credit man whose name is the same as the attorney's lives in Chicago.

Now then, WHO IS THE ADJUSTOR?

Very cordially yours,

P. S. If you can't find the solution . . . or want a confirmation . . . drop me a memo. If you have a claim to place for collection . . . call on the ——— Co.

In somewhat amusing contrast (to us if not to the writer), is a letter from a man sentenced to liquidation, and with only one last hope. There is little doubt of the writer's purpose. He wanted action, and he wanted it quickly. "Dear Governor," he wrote, "They are fixin' to hang me on Thursday—and here it is Tuesday."



*How to handle your mail.* If you read and mark a letter correctly, the purpose of the reply is more easily established. Many business correspondents make the mistake of taking a quick peep at the morning mail, and then shoving it aside for later handling. This involves a second reading, which often could be avoided. The most efficient letter-men reduce their dictation as much as possible to a one-time operation.

Each letter is read thoroughly, and the points that must be covered in the reply are marked with a red pencil. In many cases, where the facts are already known, the reply can be dictated immediately. No time is lost, and the marked passages establish purpose. Even when it is necessary to defer the reply for the lack of needed information, a second careful reading of the letter is not required. The writer simply picks it up and looks at the red marks.

This use of a red pencil as you read your mail, and the immediate reply to as many letters as possible, are two habits which will save time and also enhance your reputation as a dictator who gets things done without fuss or bother.

*Declare the purpose to yourself.* It is hardly possible that anyone would question the first step in planning a business letter, or for that matter, any other kind of a letter. When you know the "why" of any task, you proceed without lost motion to the "how" it may best be done. It is seldom necessary to rewrite a letter when your purpose is clearly understood at the start. Only scatter-brains are forced to do things over; hence, the smart dictator has another habit that helps him to shoot his arrows straight. He mentally surveys the letter-job he is about to do, and *to himself declares the purpose*. "I am writing this letter . . .

to make this dealer understand that the goods substituted were superior in quality to those he ordered—that we were trying to do him a favor so that he would not be caught short of merchandise during his sale.

to prove to this salesman that the new territory he has been asked to take is better than the old one—that the change is a promotion and not unfair as he now thinks.

to explain that we cannot grant a concession to one buyer unless it were available to the rest—to deny his request in such a way that he will respect us all the more.

to show this customer why he should pay this bill before it gets in the hands of the lawyers—to talk to him as a friend, even though he must be told we will wait only ten days longer.

to find out why this customer stopped buying from us six months ago—to make him feel we really appreciated his business, and sincerely want the privilege of serving him again.



to thank this prospect for the time he gave our salesman, even though he didn't buy—to win goodwill for the company, and a better reception for the salesman on his next call.

to tell this merchant whose store was destroyed by fire not to worry about his account with us—to ask him how we may help to re-establish his business.

to refuse the request of this minister that we contribute goods for the church bazaar—to make him understand the reason, and to keep his friendship.

to acknowledge our mistake in filling the order and to say we are sorry—to do this without using a crying-towel, or attempting to give any excuses or alibis.

It doesn't matter what the situation is—how simple or complicated it may be. The declaration of purpose before you begin to dictate will help immensely to clarify your thinking, and to produce the letter which moves straight to the announced objective.

*Second step, get all the facts.* To dictate a business letter, knowing you are not fully informed but thinking you may bluff it through, is both foolish and unpardonable. Not only is "face" lost with the reader, but the chances are he will come back for a better explanation. You have to get the facts anyway, and then you have written two letters where one would have sufficed.

When a man talks across space to his reader, surely and positively, because he knows what he is talking about, his words carry power and conviction. We all respect facts. We quickly lose confidence in anyone who, through ignorance or laziness, seems unsure of his own ground.

Fortunately, most of the facts needed to handle business correspondence are easily available. If a clerk in the credit department is about to write about a past-due bill, he can review the copies of previous letters to the same customer. If someone in the sales department is asked a technical question about a new product or a piece of machinery, he can get the answer from the director of research or the chief engineer. Practically everything done in a company is a matter of record. The correspondent who aims for the top will inform himself with respect to the methods, products, and policies of his organization. The facts we need to know are seldom withheld from us. And the greater your knowledge, the greater your power as a letter-writer!

*"How to play chess," in two paragraphs.* Perhaps you do not know how to play chess. You have heard it is a very difficult game to be mastered after years of study. Well, now you can easily become an expert. In two short paragraphs, the following letter tells



you how to play—"through to the finer points." It was written by a lady-clerk in one of the big mail order houses. The customer, living in North Dakota, was a farmer's wife who had purchased a set of chessmen, and then had written for instructions for playing the game. Here is what Miss Whataguesser told her:

Dear Madam:

We do not have any special directions printed for playing chess, but I would suggest that you take one chess and move it from the bottom to the center, following the game through to the finer points.

The first party that fills in the top of the board wins the game. We assure you, that if you follow these instructions carefully, you will be able to play the game to your full satisfaction.

Very truly yours,

Could such a letter be genuine? Yes, indeed. It was dictated and typed, but fortunately a supervisor in the mail order house caught the rascal before it got into the mail bag. The clerk perhaps thought she was smart to be able to write something about which she knew absolutely nothing. Smart enough, no doubt to lose her job!

*How lack of facts defeats the letter's purpose.* It has been mentioned how the abuse of facts, or the lack of them, tends to destroy reader confidence. It does more than that. Usually, the letter fails utterly to accomplish its purpose. Examine the opening and closing paragraphs of a letter mailed to an alumnus of a Big Ten University by the circulation manager of the campus newspaper.

We are in the midst of the football season again—that most glamorous time of the entire college year. . . .

Don't pass up this intensely interesting period. Follow the teams from day to day in the columns of the Daily ———.

The parts of the letter omitted were neither too good nor too bad, but whoever approved the mailing overlooked one important fact. "We are in the midst of the football season—follow the teams from day to day," appealed the circulation manager. Had he declared the purpose of his letter, no doubt it would have been "to convince this alumnus that he should keep in touch with the football team this fall by subscribing to our student newspaper."

But—and it's a sad *but*—the letter was dated November 29, and the last football game of the season had been played the week before. The thrills used as bait for the reader's money had ceased to



exist until another year—a simple fact which made the letter worthless.

This failure to change with the calendar is no rare accident in the business world. It is easy to prepare a form letter, start it going, check results for a while, and then continue sending it long after the things it talks about have ended or lost their appeal.

From the president of one of Chicago's Michigan Avenue hotels, came a nicely worded Christmas letter to a friend. The use of a rubber stamp for the president's signature contradicted the personal tone of the copy, yet the recipient was graciously thanked for the many times he had stopped at the hotel, and heartily invited to make it his Chicago home on every future visit. The letter would have made a fine impression, except for one fact which didn't hold water. The reader had *never* been a guest of that hotel. This made everything the letter said sound insincere.

"Scratching the wrong back" in business correspondence is always a dangerous practice. The reader knows he is getting a letter meant for somebody else, or at least not for him. His opinion of the company goes down instead of up. After a few similar experiences, he becomes suspicious of all goodwill letters.

A very beautiful letter of condolence once came to Mrs. L. E. Frailey. The writer's choice of words was magnificent, and the whole effect would have been quite comforting, had it not been for one error. You see, the purpose of the letter, as revealed toward the end, was to sell the lady a tombstone for her husband's grave—a purpose which the latter deemed absolutely unnecessary and somewhat belittling.

Another letter equally wide of its mark, and thus only a waste of effort and postage, was one which began, "You do not need to be bald any longer." This would have been good news, perhaps, to one whose head was smooth, but not to the recipient. Gray hair, yes! But bald—what an insulting suggestion!

Know what you are talking about, and shoot at the right target, otherwise, the backfire can be terrific.

*When right and left hands work apart.* Another form of factual inaccuracy in letters is that caused by lack of co-ordination between men or departments in the same company. For example, the promotion manager of a publishing house writes, "I am really disturbed that we have not heard from you concerning your renewal." Then he sweeps into a long, and somewhat windy exposition of the fine features which the former subscriber has been missing. The close is an urge for immediate action—"You surely cannot afford to delay any longer. We will expect and appreciate your renewal this week."



The letter so far is not too weak, but there follows a startling postscript. "If you *have* renewed," it says, "please disregard this letter." The writer admits lack of teamwork between himself and the keeper of records—or else he is just too lazy to find out whether or not the renewal has been received. In either event, he is taking advantage of the reader's time by asking him to wade through a long letter, only to confess it may have been unnecessary.

A somewhat more obliging fellow is the president of a mail order house. He, too, is shooting in the dark, but he admits it in the first paragraph.

We have been mighty busy lately, and have not had time to check up your name with our order list to see if you have sent us your order, but we expect to do so soon. If you already have sent us your order, you do not need to pay any attention to this letter.

Evidently, the confession of ignorance weighs heavily in this executive's mind, for toward the end of his letter, he again returns to the subject.

I am sorry we have not had time to check up your name with our order list, as you probably have sent us your order already, or expect to do so soon. If you haven't, let us hear from you promptly.

The reaction to such a flabby excuse for inefficiency could scarcely be good. Twice the president says he has been "too busy" to "check up" (why *up*?) the reader's name. What he really admits is ignorance of a fact needed, and obtainable, before the letter was dictated.

The American public has been led to expect efficient performance in big business. Anything short of that is a confession of weakness which undermines faith and interferes with progress. To plan a successful business letter, it is necessary to have or to *get* all facts related to the subject. Facts win respect. Facts build confidence. Be sure you have them.

*Third step is to visualize the reader.* Know your purpose, know the facts, know your reader. When this third step is taken, the letter is beginning to "jell" in your mind. You can now think of what may be said in terms of the man or woman who is going to read it. The point that might be most persuasive to reader Jones might fall far short if presented to reader Smith. Certain groups of people, bound together by similar living habits, occupations, and cultural levels, will tend to be receptive to the same suggestions—and that fact is important in planning a form letter—but the psy-



chologists tell us no two individuals are exactly alike, or susceptible to the same arguments or reasons. Hence, the best letter will always be the one which is custom-built to fit the particular reader.

This seeking to approach the reader where he may be vulnerable, this rubbing of his "soft spots," is fundamental in the planning of a business letter. The expert learns to *look through the reader's eyes*, to understand his likes and dislikes, and to share his emotions. "It is a rare and priceless asset," says a famous copy-writer, "when a man dictating a letter can *project* himself two or three days hence and imagine he is just now reading his own letter." When you are able to do that, your own opinions and valuations fade into the background. It is what the reader thinks, or wants, or likes, that counts. He is the one that must be pleased. And the more you know about him, the better are your chances of gaining a favorable reaction.

*How to form the mental image.* The business correspondent about to dictate a batch of letters will of course encounter various degrees of difficulty in visualizing the readers. If he happens to know dealer Brown personally, the problem is comparatively easy. His success then depends on his knowledge of human nature, and his understanding of Brown's personality; but he must still see through Brown's eyes rather than his own. Some men are better judges of human nature than others. They are the "mixers" who get along well with all kinds of people. They make friends with common folks as easily as with "bigwigs," and this is a valuable asset to a letter-writer.

Dealer Martin, next on the list, may be only the name of a customer to the dictator, but certain facts about Martin are learned indirectly. He must be progressive and up-to-date or he would not stand near the top in sales among the several hundred dealers. The correspondence file reveals that Martin pays his bills promptly, that his relations with the sales department always have been friendly, that one of his sons went to Yale, that he was once Mayor of his city. Gradually the mental image of dealer Martin begins to form. His letters, too, are revealing. They indicate a sense of humor, a capacity for seeing both sides of a moot question, but also a well-defined stubbornness once Martin has declared his point of view. His letters frequently mention seeing a football game, playing golf, or something about his bowling average. It is plain he is the athletic type, at least he is keenly interested in sports.

You might ask, "Who would take time to study previous correspondence just to answer one letter?" The truthful answer is that many dictators *never* do it, some because they are "too busy," and others because they are too lazy. No one is recommending that



such a plan be followed in answering *all* letters. But if you sat at your desk one morning, with a letter from dealer Martin in your hand, wondering what to say because a situation has developed which may break the business relationship—if that were true, wouldn't you want to get from Martin's file all of the help it might give you? The people who push aside any plan that involves a little extra effort, are those unable to differentiate between a routine situation and one in which there is a real problem to solve. You cannot take all of the principles of letter-writing too literally—they are to be applied when and if they are necessary.

There can be no question, however, about the advantage of visualizing your reader. Even if the mental image is not perfect or complete, it seems to place the two of you in the same room. He is not just a name, but a human being. You can *talk* to him as you would in person. And you know from previous sections of this Handbook, that *talking* is the secret of writing an effective letter. The mediocre letter-man says, "I must clean up this correspondence today." The good letter-man says, "Now I must talk with all these people."

*Visualizing the stranger.* Of course, many business letters go to unknown persons—a man in some distant state wants to know about a product, a London broker inquires about sales possibilities in England, a lady doesn't like a radio program because it frightens her children. In such cases the mental images are bound to be vague, although an individual may often reveal things about himself in his letter. Beyond those hints, when they are present, the dictator has only his knowledge of human nature and of certain group characteristics.

A letter to a merchant in Vermont would probably differ from one covering the same subject to a merchant in New Orleans. You would not expect, either, the same language or appeals in letters to prospects in New York City, Farmer, Ohio, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. In the same way, a sales letter to a Methodist minister would differ from one mailed to the maker of slot-machines. There are many of these well-understood factors—geographical, racial, occupational—which influence the letters of experienced dictators.

An equally difficult task in forming the right mental image is the preparation of the form letter which may be sent to thousands of people in all parts of the country. Here, the dictator can only set up in his mind what appears to be the typical reader, and then plan his message for that composite individual. He knows he cannot influence everybody on his list favorably, but he aims for a favorable reaction from the largest possible number. When the list is occupational, such as schoolteachers, lawyers, or funeral directors,



the image of the typical reader is more readily formed. *This is also true when those who will receive the form letter have allied interests—society women, club members, labor groups, golf fans, and all the others you can recall.*

*Fourth step, choosing the ammunition.* Down the fairway goes the professional golfer to the place where the next shot is to be made. The caddy is waiting with the usual big bag of clubs. To one who has never played the game, it looks foolish to carry so many, but the caddy doesn't complain. He knows every one of those clubs has a purpose, and the winning of the purse might well depend on the selection of the right one for a particular shot. He wants his man to win.

So now the shot must be made. The "pro" surveys the position of the ball, the distance to the green, and the obstacles to be avoided. Finally, his mind is made up. "Four iron," he says. The caddy looks worried, for the green looks far away, but he knows better than to blink an eyelid. "Crack!" The head of the club cuts a path through the sod and lifts the ball on its course. Just over the trap—the caddy holds his breath! Up toward the cup rolls the ball, and stops short only a few inches.

Down the fairway they go again, the boy and his hero. "Wish I could hit a shot like that," the former exclaims. "Wasn't me," the "pro" replies. "I just happened to take the right club."

The explanation of the golfer could just as well be that of the letter-writer who has received a favorable reply. "Wasn't *me*," he might say, "I just happened to select the right appeal." You see, the first three steps in planning a letter all contribute to the fourth.

First, know the purpose—that's wanting to reach the green in one shot. Second, know the facts—that's studying the position of the ball, the distance, the obstacles. Third, visualize the reader—that's the mental image of the ball in flight. Fourth, choose the best appeal—that's taking the right club from the bag. Each step is important, but they all co-operate to produce the desired result.

The situations to be handled in golf or letter-writing are never quite the same. To reach other greens no farther away, the golfer may one time take a spoon because he needs loft to clear some trees, or another time he may take a jigger for a bullet-shot under the branches. To gain a reply with an order, the letter-writer may one time use "economy" to overcome the resistance of a tight-fisted prospect, and another time he may use "style" to whet the desire of a playboy who counts not the cost.

For every reader or prospect, you are likely to find a different combination of "soft spots"—the things or benefits or reasons to



which *he* is most vulnerable. Knowing *what* to say to *whom* and *when* is part of the planning of a business letter.

*How letter-writers probe for "soft spots."* Most business correspondents take this fourth step in letter-planning, even though they often seem to ignore the others. You seldom read a sales letter, for example, without noting how the writer appears to be trying to "cash in" on what he thinks to be some point of vulnerability in his reader. Examine the following quotations:

You know, the Irish are an impulsive race. Take me for an example. I was born on the 14th of March. Now if I hadn't been in such a hurry to see what was goin' on in the world I could have waited three days longer. Then I could have shared the 17th with St. Patrick. And that would have been a great honor for both of us.

(The Irish cling together as a race. They love their saint. The appeal is strong as a door-opener for the letter, but only when mailed to an Irishman.)

Did you know that twenty years ago there were four Sealyham champions in one litter? This is a record unsurpassed by any other breed except Springer Spaniels.

(Sent to a man who had seven Sealyhams, the letter obviously hits a "soft spot," and of course, the appeal would be even greater to a lover of Springer Spaniels.)

Sometimes we get a steak that's a little tough, but we like steak, and there isn't any better steak available—so we take a firm grip on the knife and fork and bear down.

Business is sometimes like that. Conditions are not the best, but it's beyond us to change them. Still, we can get some of that business if we take hold of the knife and fork, and really cut in.

(Probably steak is a magic word to most men. Thus, the letter gets off to a good start. It would backfire, though, in the hands of one who did not eat steak.)

A young telegraph operator had no money, and his salary was so small he could hardly make ends meet. But he decided that he had to risk some of that scant salary if ever he was to get anywhere. So he bought \$5 worth of postage stamps, and in his spare time penned letters to other telegraphers along the line, telling them about a low-priced watch he could get for them at a low price.

Soon he began to get orders, and as each one came in, he sent part of the money to a watch factory with orders to deliver the



watch direct to the buyer, and then he put the rest of the money into more postage stamps. Before many months, he was making so much money selling watches that he gave up his job to build a business by mail. That telegraph operator's name was Sears, and you know the business he founded as Sears Roebuck & Company.

(The appeal, and it runs throughout the letter, is to the desire for more money—leading the reader to wonder if he, too, might become another Sears.)

Here is a letter that seeks to create business for a landscape gardener. For lack of any request for action at the end, it might be called a "sowhat" letter, were you not told it was one of a series sent to the same man. Thus, the purpose was to remind rather than to sell.

Dear Mr. Doe:

Let's talk your language for a moment.

In a certain room in your factory is a hide. Sooner or later it will be placed in the show-window of a high class store, in the form of a pair of shoes. Master craftsmen will have transformed it into a pair of the finest shoes made—Doe shoes.

A thousand things have happened to it—things it has taken a lifetime to learn. Cheaper shoes are made—but none that are less expensive—for you tell me they will outlast two ordinary pairs. They are the best—made for the "man who cares."

The grounds around your new home are like that hide.

And like that hide, some master craftsman is going to change them into surroundings—simple, useful, attractive. A thousand things are going to happen to them—things that have taken a lifetime to learn. They must turn out to be the best—because they, too, belong to the "man who cares!"

Durability—snugness—elegance—poise—smoothness—these things are bound up in every pair of Doe shoes.

And those same things will make your grounds entirely satisfactory.

Sincerely yours,

The appeal in that letter is to pride. Harold McQueen, the writer, is saying, "You make the best shoes, and we do the best landscape gardening. Birds of a feather should get together."

*A letter to the prospect's dog.* Using the owner's love of his dog as the appeal, the writer of the letter below added punch to his sales talk by addressing it to the dog. According to the company magazine, *Norge*, the result was a sale for the author, Andy Jerpe.



Dear Skippy:

I sure hope you have all the cats in the neighborhood under control, so that you can take time to read this letter and give me a hand.

Skippy, I need some help, so since we know each other pretty well by now, I am going to ask you to deliver this message to Bill Bercher [the prospect] for me.

Do you remember the day when Mrs. Bercher wasn't looking, and I showed you a picture of the Norge Rollator Refrigerator that matched your Norge Range? I said to you, "Skippy, this kitchen will never be complete until that refrigerator is here to match the range!" Then you shook your head sadly and said, "Doggone it, I know it!"

Well, Skippy, there's only one way for us to solve that problem, and that is for us to sell this Norge Refrigerator to Bill Bercher, and if we do, I'll give you a swell string of wieners, and a soup-bone, as commission for helping me close the deal.

Here's what you have to do. When he is through supper, and feeling good, put your head on his knee and say, "Bill, I've been talking to that tall, funny looking Swede by the name of Jerpe. We both agree that a Norge Refrigerator should be in that kitchen, but he is afraid to come out here to sell it to you because you might sic me on him to ruin a beautiful friendship, and besides he has only one pair of pants to that suit he always wears.

Tell him about those nine different shelf arrangements, and that in the new job he can store a whole case (Bill will know what I mean), watermelons, turkeys, and other big items.

Ask him to come down to the store Saturday afternoon with Mrs. Bercher. Skippy, if you handle this job right, all the cats in the neighborhood will wonder why you disappeared, because you'll seldom leave the kitchen!

So long, and thanks for the help.

Andy

Of course, there will always be those on the conservative side to ridicule such letters as childish and beneath the dignity of business. But it still remains a fact, many times proved, that out-of-the-groove appeals sometimes succeed when the more conventional kind fail.

*The appeal to home-town pride.* The fellow who first said, "There is no place like home," may have had an idea which it would pay letter-writers to adopt more often than they do. There seems to be a streak of loyalty in the average human being which makes him stand up for his home town, though it be as humble as Dogpatch or



Toonerville. Thus, when the writer of a business letter is able, without exaggeration, to work in a "plug" for the reader's place of abode, he is using an old appeal that helps to break the ice. For example:

Dear Mr. Doe:

Boston once held a tea party. There was objection to an exorbitant tax on a cargo of tea, you will remember, so it was dumped overboard.

Is Boston today less quick to throw overboard anything that carries too high a tax?

Waste is a form of tax. If there is a way to dump that tax, naturally you are for it.

Paper-carded belt hooks are from 10% to 25% wasteful. That waste tax is avoided by the use of improved Safety Belt Hooks, with Steel Binder Bars, to which there is NO WASTE. Safety Belt Hooks also make smoother, longer-lived joints.

The literature and notebook enclosed tell the story. You can get Safety Belt Hooks and Lacers from the Boston dealers named below. If there are others you prefer to deal with, any one of them will get Safety products for you.

Very truly yours,

Evidently in the above letter, H. H. Stalker, was not using the home-town appeal by accident, for it appears in his messages to prospects and dealers in other cities.

Dear Mr. Brown:

Here is the information requested, and we think something is about ready to explode down there in your fine town in the way of orders.

We say fine town, not as a bit of flattery, but because the writer remembers vividly spending a week in Houston during the International Rotary Convention. If your sales punch down in Houston matches your hospitality, you should decidedly go places with Safety Hooks and Lacers.

There is . . .

Dear Mr. Black:

A Philadelphian, one Benjamin Franklin by name, had more to say about waste than perhaps any other man who ever lived in Philadelphia, or elsewhere.



With such a tradition, the folks of Philadelphia ought to be about as thrifty as folks come anywhere. If we are right, then you will be very much interested in the next paragraph.

Paper-carded belt hooks are from 10% to 25% wasteful. That waste is . . .

*The sincerity of plain talking.* The next letter is one in which there is no beating of bushes or sounding of trumpets. The writer uses plain speech which is both convincing and refreshing. The appeal is, "We will treat you right," and you feel it is sincere.

Dear Mr. Doc:

We don't give rare coins but there's more than one way to get your money's worth out of a used car.

The idea that a certain dealer is about to sprout wings, and make things heavenly for used car buyers has been going the rounds so long that it rattles. The reason we give our customers their money's worth, isn't because we are so big-hearted we can't help it. If you want to know the reason, it is because we want to stay in business.

The Mrs. has her mind set on sending our boy, Charlie, to college. If he is like I am, it will be wasted, but the Mrs. says he isn't and that's that.

I haven't enough money to retire on and I can't stand to loaf when anybody is looking; and we have such big show windows that people are always looking. So for those reasons I figure my best bet is to treat buyers right so they will come back, and tell others they got a good deal from Jimmy Davies.

Right now, I have some cars that are worth looking into. You won't find any rare dimes under the cushions—I look for them myself—but you will get all you bargain for.

I'd like to show you the Dodge Coupe Charlie Brooks traded in last week—\$495 takes it and you cannot take as long as you like to pay for it. No terms beyond 20 months go here.

Cordially yours,

As we recall, this letter was lathed by letter carpenter Vic Knight. Whether or not it sold the Dodge Coupe is not recorded. Nevertheless, the appeal is strong to those who are tired of high-sounding but empty promises.

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### ***Buys Car for \$150; Finds a Dime in It Worth \$450***

Alliance, O., April 1.—Mrs. W. H. Shaw of Alliance reported that her cousin, Roy Koontz of Bloomington, Ind., bought a used car in Cleveland for \$150. When he cleaned the antique he found a dime dated 1821 under a seat cushion. A coin expert offered him \$450 for the dime.

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*A letter that tickles the funny-bone.* Appealing to the reader's sense of humor is a device often used to win acceptance for a business letter. The following example was used by Chicago insurance agents, Hochfeldt, Boersma & Co. It really does a double job. The "explanation of golf" probably made the prospects laugh, but the opening paragraph may also have frightened them.

## HOCHFELDT, BOERSMA & CO.

### Complete Insurance Service

608 Insurance Exchange . . 175 W. Jackson Boulevard  
Telephone Wabash 4300

Chicago

Dear Sir:

You cannot buy an insurance policy that will guarantee you against a hook or a slice; but we can give you a policy that will keep some smart lawyer from hooking your bankroll or taking a slice out of your possessions in the event that you have an accident while golfing.

If golf is your only sport, we recommend the combination policy described: Personal Injury Liability, \$15,000/30,000; Property Damage Liability \$1,000; Loss or Damage to Golf Equipment, \$200.00. Cost \$20.07 for three years.

#### AN EXPLANATION OF GOLF

Golf is a form of work made expensive enough for a rich man to enjoy it. It is physical and mental exertion made attractive by the fact that you have to dress for it in a \$200,000 clubhouse.

Golf is what letter-carrying, ditch-digging and carpet-beating would be if these three tasks had to be performed on the same hot afternoon, in short pants and colored socks, by gouty-looking gentlemen who required a different implement for every mood.

Golf is the simplest-looking game in the world when you decide to take it up, and the toughest-looking after you have been at it 10 or 12 years.

It is probably the only known game a man can play as long as a quarter of a century and then discover that it was too deep for him in the first place.

A golf course has 18 holes, 17 of which are unnecessary and put in to make the game harder. A "hole" is a tin cup in the center of a "green". A green is a small parcel of grass costing about \$1.98 a blade, and a lot of unfinished excavations.

The idea is to get the golf ball from a given point into each of the 18 cups in the fewest strokes and the greatest number of words.

The ball must not be thrown, pushed or carried. It must be propelled entirely by about \$200 worth of curious-looking instruments especially designed to provoke the owner.

Each implement has a specific purpose, and ultimately some golfers get to know what that purpose is. They are the exceptions.

After each hole has been completed, the golfer counts his strokes. Then he subtracts 6 and says, "Made that in 5. That's one above par. Shall we play for 50 cents on the next hole, too, Ed?"

After the final, or 18th hole, the golfer adds up his score and stops when he has reached 37. He then has a swim, a pint of —, sings "Sweet Adeline" with six other liars, and calls it the end of a perfect day.

San Francisco Kinsman

If you engage in other sports, the broader sports and pastimes policy will be needed, as described in the other circular.

Fill out the information below, and we shall be glad to send you a policy for your approval.

Very truly yours,

HOCHFELDT, BOERSMA & CO.

By: *M.H. Hochfeldt*

\*\*\*\*\*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Golfers Liability \_\_\_\_\_ Limits Wanted \_\_\_\_\_

Sports Liability \_\_\_\_\_ Limits Wanted \_\_\_\_\_

Property Damage Liability \_\_\_\_\_ Limit \$1000

Golfers Equipment Insurance \_\_\_\_\_ Limit \$200

*Use of "scare copy" as appeal for action.* One of the major motives for human behavior is fear. People buy many things to protect themselves against hazards that may be real or imaginary.



Hence, the use of "scare copy" is frequently seen in advertising and sales. A picture of some horrible automobile accident, with a description of all the gory details, may influence you to buy tires with a patented safety tread, or an insurance policy that would pay your hospital bills. A story about head-colds, and how they may lead to pneumonia and death, may be used to frighten you into the acquisition of nose-drops or vitamins. Check your own buying habits, and you will be surprised to find how many of them are the result of the desire to protect yourself against poverty, sickness, and other forms of catastrophe. Check the letters that you get, and you will be surprised to find how many of them use fear as the major appeal.

Perhaps there is no emotion more universally shared than the dread of old age, particularly the fear that it may catch us unprepared to live without the aid of charity. To be sure, this is a fear that may vary in degree among different individuals and groups, but few of us are entirely free from it. Lady schoolteachers, never rewarded adequately for their efforts, and hard put to lay aside a nest egg, seem especially susceptible to the fear of old age, and the hardships it may bring upon them. That is the assumption which must have prompted the following sales letter.

Dear Miss Doe:

It was Thursday evening—the School Board was in session. There had been a lot of spirited discussion during the evening, and all items had been disposed of—except one. Down at the bottom of the president's memo were but two words—"Miss Meridith."

To the School Board, it was merely another item of business routine, but to Miss Meridith it was a matter which affected her entire future.

The Board quickly decided: "She has served faithfully and well, but we need younger blood. She always has proved very capable, but she's getting a bit too old to teach. Her health isn't the best, and much as we regret it, she will have to be replaced."

The above incident is tragic, but not unusual. In fact, it is a typical experience which might be multiplied many times daily. And in all cases, the fate of the teacher hangs in the balance.

One of these days, perhaps, *your* name will be scrawled on the president's memo.

Right now, Miss Doe, that day seems far removed, but come it will, as it finally must to all in the teaching profession. Just how will the decision of the Board affect you?

With your earnings reduced, or perhaps cut off entirely, how will you live? Will you be compelled to throw yourself on the char-



ity of friends or relatives—or will you mark the day as the beginning of a new era, bringing release from classroom duties, the thrills of a trip around the world, the opportunity to pursue a hobby, a future free from money worries?

Thousands of teachers already have adopted the Income Reserve Plan. Perhaps, it may appeal to you. But first we suggest you send for the free booklet, "Money for the Wonderful Things All Women Crave."

The card will bring it to you quickly.

Sincerely yours,

Is there anything unethical in the appeal to the fear of old age as used in the above letter? Certainly not! Even though the purpose is to sell an insurance plan, the result may be the solution of the schoolteacher's problem. In that sense, it offers an economic blessing.

*Varying the appeal to find vulnerability.* The approach just cited is obviously not the only one that could be used in a sales letter to teachers. If you were planning such a letter, your analysis of the individual or group might lead you to shoot from an entirely different angle—or, you might decide to test several appeals whose strength appeared about equal. Here, for example, are the opening paragraphs of three letters, mailed for the same purpose, but each probing a different possible soft spot.

Dear Miss Blank:

There's a little story of Joseph Conrad that every schoolteacher will appreciate.

Long ago, when Conrad was a boy, he sat gazing at a map of the world. Suddenly, thrusting a grimy finger upon a colorful speck, the youngster exclaimed, "Some day I'm going there."

"Some day I'm going there!"

I wonder if there is a teacher in all the world, who hasn't said those very words! In teaching some bit of history or geography, you've felt an impelling desire to cast the book aside, and set forth on a joyous journey.

Hidden away in our hearts, we all have that dream of some day visiting those storied countries beyond the sea.

(Appeal to the desire for travel)

. . . . .

Dear Miss Blank:

A dear old teacher I used to know, confided to me her fondest dream—to end her days in a cozy little cottage just over the hill



from the schoolhouse, where she could hear the cheery ding-dong of the bell . . . and never have to answer it at all.

She loved teaching, of course. And she had given to it the best years of her life. But to each of us there will come a time when we want to retire from active life, and take a well-earned rest.

To solve that problem, we have devised a wonderful policy, just for you. It will assure your vine-clad cottage, with happy days for rest and relaxation.

(Appeal to desire to get away from it all)

Dear Miss Blank:

In that last quarter of an hour, after the scholars have gone home, and you are alone in the schoolroom, setting your desk to rights . . .

. . . don't you sometimes stop and wonder what the future holds for you? Things are running pretty smoothly now. You really are enjoying your work. But what about the declining years of life? Will you have to drudge along at the same old hum-drum routine, just as so many elderly teachers of your acquaintance are doing?

Or will you be able to enjoy life, and make your cherished dreams come true?

Now—today—you have an opportunity to decide.

(Appeal to desire for freedom in later years)

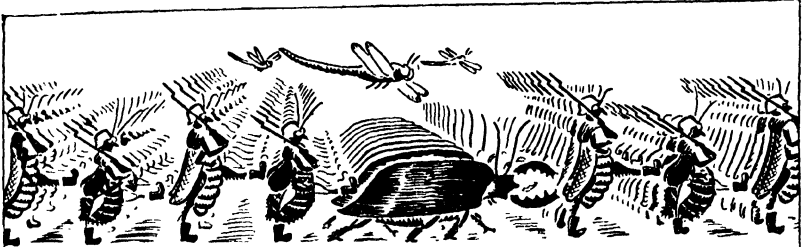
Just as the quarterback of a football team may use different plays to test for soft spots in the opposing line, so is it often necessary for the letter-writer to try various appeals before he can be sure which is most effective. This can never safely be determined by opinion or guess. The only sure way to *know* is to test, and then test again.

*Robert Stone's letter about germs.* On the next page is a "scare" letter which produced an exceptional return for the American Bandage Corporation. Robert Stone, an outstanding letter-man of the nation's younger group, authored it.

*An appeal to superstition.* The soft spot you are seeking when you plan a business letter may not always be of the conventional variety. Instead, by mere intuition—or is it the help of Providence?—you may hit upon an unusual appeal that does the perfect job. A certain young man—you may guess his identity—once sat in his St. Louis office, quite glum and discouraged. He was thumbing idly through the card file of customers, wondering what he might do to bring rain where there had been so much drought, when he happened to notice that an out-of-town order had been received



several months previously on a Friday, the thirteenth. The calendar on the wall said that this very day was the second and only other Friday the thirteenth of the year. Had the young chap been



QUESTION: WHAT IS THE SIXTH COLUMN? ANSWER: IT'S GERMS! -- GERMS! -- GERMS! -- Marching up and down -- GERMS! -- GERMS! -- GERMS!

Belligerent armies have nothing on the army of GERMS. This army is millions strong. It is invisible. It is your enemy and the enemy of every one of your employees. It attacks when its victims are defenseless. The weak fall victims to infection. Sometimes death results.

Our great country has its army to defend it. A powerful defense against the army of GERMS is a bandage impregnated with an efficient disinfectant.

"a.b.c. GAUZEAND", the medicated, standard brand of self-adhering gauze, is such a bandage. It is medicated with the exclusive medication known as Mercury Ricinoleate. It isn't genuine unless it contains this medication. "a.b.c. GAUZEAND" is the enemy of every GERM. It acts as a protective measure against the entrance of GERMS. It acts as an inhibitory antiseptic (preventing growth of germs) when kept in prolonged contact with moist injuries.

You want protection for yourself and your employees. You want a surgical dressing that keeps employees on the job. Many Safety Directors, such as yourself, report that "a.b.c. GAUZEAND" steps up production.

Mr. A. S. Hetherington of the Universal Atlas Cement Company has this to say about "a.b.c. GAUZEAND". "It is ideal for that hard to bandage injury". Jean Bergeron, the Registered Nurse at the Container Corp. says, "It's the most beneficial bandage ever made and I use it exclusively in all my first aid work".

Your army of employees deserves protection from the invisible army of GERMS. Be sure that you are supplied with ammunition in the form of "a.b.c. GAUZEAND". Examine the attached quotation sheet right now. Check on your supply.

Win your battle against GERMS. Let "a.b.c. GAUZEAND" be your first line of defense.

RS:DH

Yours for protection,

*Robert Stone*  
Robert Stone, General,

ARMY OF GERM KILLERS

AMERICAN BANDAGE CORP., 1701-07 N. Damen Ave., Chicago, Ill.

wiser in the ways of the business world, he would have scorned the idea that the coincidence might develop an order. But he didn't know any better, so he hand-pecked on his typewriter the following "foolish" sales letter.



Dear Mr. Doe:

I am not superstitious, but . . .

There are only two Friday, the thirteenths, appearing on this year's calendar.

On Friday, January, the thirteenth, you gave me an order for a carload of Fancy Blue Rose Rice. I appreciated that order more than you knew, for it happened to be my first sale to an out-of-town jobber.

Now, here we are again to Friday, the thirteenth, and I can't resist wondering if you are not ready to book another carload.

I think I can persuade one of our mills to give you a price of 4¢ on the Fancy, and 3 $\frac{7}{8}$ ¢ on the Choice, f.o.b. mill, of course. And in the car could be placed a little Fancy Head Rice at about 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ ¢!

The prices are right. Give me the specifications, and I *will* be superstitious all the rest of my life.

Gratefully yours,

Many of the young man's friends have laughed at that letter, and when reminded that the only true test of a letter is whether or not it does the job, they have promptly replied, "Luck, my boy, just luck." Some have said "it couldn't happen," which may be true, except that it *did*.

Dear friend Frailey:

The writer's birthday was Friday, January the thirteenth.

While I have a stock of rice and a car in transit from Texas, I am going to give you an order for a car, for I know I can depend on you for QUALITY. So enter me 225 bags Fancy Blue Rose, 75 bags Fancy Head, at prices you mentioned, and would prefer Texas; but that is up to you for quality.

I might say in passing that it is a pleasure for me to send you this order, for from your letter, I know it will be appreciated and happily executed.

Very sincerely yours,

Perhaps you may call the success of that letter a stroke of pure luck; but at least it proves that, contrary to popular thought, there *is* sentiment in business. The man who wrote the letter had the reputation of being a smart buyer, the last to let his heart influence his head. He was vulnerable to appreciation, though. He sensed that the young man needed the order, and he gladly came across. Did the birthday help? Maybe—let's not split hairs.



*Be sure the appeal will not backfire.* Sometimes a business letter may have the opposite effect from that intended. Basically, the appeal may be good, but it is handled in such a way that the reader is irritated rather than pleased. Consider this sales letter which presents a very necessary service, but not in the most tactful manner.

Dear Sir:

When you decided on a midnight snack the other night and turned on the kitchen light only to find a few hundred roaches had the same idea—did you cuss under your breath, and say to yourself, “We’ve got to get rid of these \*\*\*!!! roaches”?

Maybe, you forgot the next morning, maybe it was too much trouble—maybe you didn’t like the thought of a truck covered with signs such as “WE KILL BEDBUGS” rolling up in front of your house, so that your neighbors would know your troubles.

Now, through our personalized service, we not only rid your home of these obnoxious night prowlers, but we completely moth proof all clothes closets, furniture, rugs, or garments that show signs of moth attack. Our service also eliminates waterbugs, ants, silverfish, etc., with no fuss, no muss—you and the insects are the only ones who will know we have been around—and the insects won’t know it for long.

It is not necessary to leave your home. Our neat, well-trained men will call, do the work, and leave your premises spick and span. Our Home Service System is safe, non-contaminating to food, and is non-injurious to humans or animals.

Our price? Well, you will be amazed at the low cost.

Just mail the enclosed card, or ’phone CH —, and a courteous representative will call with absolutely no obligation on your part.

Sincerely yours,

Fundamentally, the appeal in this letter is sound. Roaches and other insects are not welcome in any home. If you happened to have any of these pests as uninvited guests, you certainly would be glad to know they could so easily and so cheaply be eliminated. The confidential treatment is also a good point. Roaches or bedbugs are nothing to be proud of, and you wouldn’t want your neighbors to know they had moved in with you.

But the *backfire* comes from the way the writer of the letter overplayed his hand. He starts with the downright assumption that the prospect’s kitchen is inhabited by roaches—not a few of them, but *hundreds*. He uses the appeal as a *fact* rather than a *possibility*. Hence, the prospect and his wife, if she read the letter, are humiliated. Particularly obnoxious is the reference later to “bedbugs”—



the most hated insect of them all. They are not mentioned as a fact, as were the roaches, but just the same there is an unpleasant insinuation that they, too, might be one of the prospect's "troubles."

The more tactful approach would have been to *start easy and work up*. Instead of the outright assertion that when the lights went on a few hundred roaches were there in the grandstand, ready to root for the home-team, only the *possibility* of their being present should have been mentioned—and even then, not such vast assembly of the pests. A woman looks upon a roach as evidence of uncleanness, and thus a reflection on her care of the home. A few roaches are bad enough, in her mind—she could never stand an army of them. The letter should have started something like this:

This is the time of the year when the war against roaches and other pests increases in fury. Where these little devils come from, nobody seems to know. When least expected, they appear in the most immaculate homes.

Perhaps, so far none of these unwelcome guests have moved in on you. And that's fine! You are lucky. But if, by chance, you have some of them around your house, you naturally want to get rid of them before they multiply, and become even a greater nuisance.

And that's where we come to the rescue. Not even your closest neighbor will know about it, but quickly, completely, we will liquidate the rascals.

In that introduction, there is nothing to offend or humiliate the readers. They are tactfully told that roaches and other pests (that would include the unmentionable bedbugs) often appear in the most immaculate homes. The rest of the letter could be in the original form. Result? Success—much business!

*You can't win by insulting your reader.* Here is another letter which backfires, although the writer may have had the best of intentions, and did not realize that his appeal included a "stinger." You will understand the circumstances by reading the letter. A real estate man was resourceful enough to take advantage of an advertisement—but his approach was not diplomatic.

Gentlemen:

I noticed your advertisement in the paper, captioned "HELP A VETERAN"—which brings to mind the old query, "Why don't you practice what you preach?"

Why don't you help him—you are the ones who are making a nice profit out of his tuition.

You can help forty of these veterans by purchasing the large house at the northeast corner of Main and Maple, and utilizing it



for your student housing. I know a lady with ample experience who will pay you good interest in the form of a monthly rental, if you prefer to be relieved of the operation of the home.

Don't let the fact that you might have bought this property for less money a few years ago stand in the way of this splendid opportunity to "HELP A VETERAN."

After this property is profitably in operation, you will be able to turn it at a profit if you should feel it wise to relinquish control.

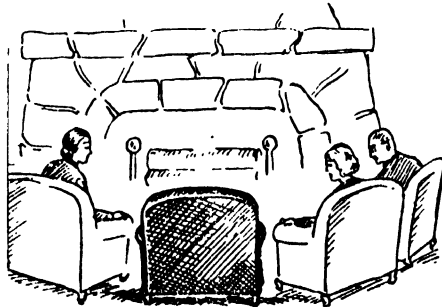
You know that having this spot to care for students will doubtless mean hundreds of dollars per year in tuition.

You can help yourself while HELPING A VETERAN.

Yours very truly,

The business college president to whom the letter was addressed submitted it as an example of tactless letter-writing. He couldn't stand the insulting question, "Why don't you practice what you preach?" Result, a sales opportunity which had some merit was destroyed by the real estate man's thoughtlessly worded appeal.

*A picture that might arouse sad memories.* It is amazing how easily a letter-writer can stub his toe when he hasn't the slightest idea of doing so. A very fine appeal to inactive customers was mailed to all of one company's lost sheep, and in many cases must have been received pleasantly. However, there is one questionable angle to the choice of the illustration, shown below, around which



"WE SHALL MEET, BUT WE SHALL MISS HIM,  
THERE WILL BE ONE VACANT CHAIR."

the letter is built. Should the appeal happen to land in the hands of a reader whose family had been visited by Death within the past year, the sight of the empty chair would awaken sad memories. During a time when war touched so many homes, the letter might do as much harm as good.

*Avoid all possible irritants.* There's an old and very wise saying, especially pertinent to letter-writers, "When in doubt, *don't*."



Unless you know your reader like a book, you run the chance of building your letter around an appeal which may offend rather than please him. For example, taking a crack at the New Deal would probably be okay to those business men whose problems have been intensified by the New Deal philosophy. However, not all business men are against the New Deal, and your unknown reader could be one of them.

In the same way, it is dangerous to mention religion or race. A very good story might poke what seems to be innocent fun at the members of a certain faith, and what if it lands in the home of one of them? You might quote a saying of a Jew, a Russian, an Irishman, or a Yankee, and have any one of those nationalities take it in the wrong way. It is far wiser not to take these chances in business letters. When in doubt, *don't*.

Even the reference to a physical attribute may rub salt in raw flesh. You have a laughable story about a bald-headed man. But it may not be so funny to one who is bald. You refer to a man who resembles a "bag of bones" and the reader has always been sensitive about being so thin. You write about the fat woman who wants to reduce but can't resist her pound of chocolates every day—and the letter is read by a lady in exactly the same plight.

You skate on thin ice when you voice a decided opinion on a controversial subject. You may detest rent control, but your reader thinks it is a fine plan. You may not like the wife of a President who frequently talked in public but your reader may think she is wonderful. Reading the comics in the newspapers may seem a childish sport to you, but what if your reader enjoys them? The purpose of your letter is to gain a meeting of minds. Why say anything that might interfere with that result?

*Make the reader feel important.* Contrary to the irritants just mentioned, it is often possible to "scratch the reader's back" by casual reference to some fact which he considers complimentary to himself. Of course this cannot be done when writing to a total stranger. For example, any of the following phrases, or similar ones, might help to make the reader feel important and because you made him feel that way—to gain his goodwill for your letter.

"The research that made this product possible started back in the days when *you were playing football at Illinois.*"

"*Your article in Sales Management* makes me sure that your mind is open to any idea which might help to motivate your salesmen."

"The credit report on you and your business was *so outstanding* that we are puzzled not to receive your check."



"We don't think these obstacles are going to get you down, for we think you are *made of the same stuff as that boy of yours* who flew so many missions in Europe."

"Because of *your leadership in civic activities*, we lean heavily on your opinion, which we know will be unbiased."

"Many men, *like yourself*, serve others so generously that they overlook the protection which would take the sting out of old age."

"Any man who has *served three terms as Mayor of his city* must be an *enterprising merchant*, and the kind who wins friends by selling only quality products."

"We understand it is useless to talk business to anyone in Columbus during the week of a championship game, but now that the *Buckeyes have finished the season undefeated*, perhaps you can find time to tell us how you liked the samples."

"For me to have a *daughter like yours*, able to make the pictures in Hollywood, would be a biological miracle, but I do appreciate beauty in design, and I can't help being enthusiastic about our new dresses for summer wear."

"Surely, as men of *good judgment*, you and your partner do not always buy on the lowest price, *nor can you be fooled* by a product which looks better than it really is."

The compliments implied in the above passages are based on *facts* and could be offered *sincerely*. They are not to be confused with the silly flattery so often seen in business letters—those attempts to curry favor which the readers quickly resent.

*The fifth step in planning a letter.* Now the five steps to be taken in planning an important business letter can be listed. Please remember that the time devoted to them depends on the nature of the problem, and that many routine letter-situations may be "taken in stride," just as you mount and ride a bicycle, once the art is mastered.

1. Know your PURPOSE
2. Get all the FACTS
3. VISUALIZE your reader
4. Choose the best APPEAL
5. CO-ORDINATE the attack

To co-ordinate means putting your points together in the order or combination to gain the best possible effect. In other words, you decide how to play your cards to win the most tricks. You are like the general who is planning to attack a section of the enemy's line. The commanding officer knows that he will use infantry, planes, tanks, flame-throwers, mortars, heavy guns, and other units, but he



must co-ordinate them perfectly to achieve the break-through. In less serious measure, this is the letter-man's problem, too. He has decided what the general letter-appeal shall be, and has decided what links to place in the Chain (see page 110), but he still must put the links together in the one best combination to provide the most strength.

*As the lawyer arranges his plea.* We doubt if the average letter-writer gives much thought to the *arrangement* of his points, and yet it is highly important that he should. He knows that he wants (1) to mention price because his figure is somewhat lower than his competitor's, (2) to talk about quality because it is at least equal to the best, (3) to emphasize style because he has a new design which he thinks will have great popular appeal. Price—quality—style! Those are his three aces, but what does it matter—in what order they are presented to the reader?

By that question the letter-writer has displayed an ignorance of psychological principles which go a long way in determining the final reaction—depending, of course, on how well they are understood and applied. One principle is that, in order to gain reader-attention, a very strong point should be used *first*. Another is that, when exposed to a number of items, we tend to remember the last one most vividly. Thus, the most convincing and action-impelling point should be offered *last*.

However, it is also true that at no place in the letter must the reader's interest be allowed to lag. This indicates that weak points, even when preceded and followed by strong ones, are *dangerous*. It is much better not to use them *at all* than to risk the reader's throwing the letter in the wastebasket and turning to something more interesting.

You see now, that the position of the man who is planning a letter is much the same as that of the lawyer who is planning his plea. The lawyer knows he must start with a strong point to get favorable interest, and that he must end with the hammer blow which may obtain the right verdict. He is also faced with the problem of keeping the jury awake throughout his argument. He knows, too, that a few strong points, forcefully presented, will have a better effect than a long list of points that tend to compete with each other in the listener's mind with the result—a little of everything, and nothing much of anything, is remembered. These are the facts which the letter-man also must understand!

If you ever have studied the formula for debate, you recognize its similarity to the above reasoning. When there are three speakers on a team, the arguments are reduced to three, each one strong and difficult to refute. These arguments are then assigned in the follow-



ing order: the strongest to the last speaker, the second-strongest to the first speaker, and the second speaker gets what's left. Sometimes a very strong point is reserved for use in the last rebuttal, the thought being that it will impress the mind of each judge, even if earlier portions of the argument have been forgotten.

*A case example.* To understand how the capable letter-writer plans a co-ordinated attack to break down reader-resistance, consider the following hypothetical situation. Jasper Jones, a real estate man, has been asked to sell a small suburban property. Based on the present market, the owner's price is a little high, but the home has many advantages which may offset this one objection. Mr. Jones reviews these sales points in his own mind (Step Two, Get the Facts), and makes a list of them on his memo pad.

Easy transportation— a bus to the city every hour—four-lane express highway for automobiles.

Restricted neighborhood of first-class homes—served by all the utilities— free from smoke and dirt of sections closer in.

Beautiful site—more than one acre of land—large oak trees, many shrubs, ravine.

House designed by nationally known architect—plans won first prize in contest conducted by popular magazine—small and compact, with all modern conveniences.

Brick walls and tile roof, insulated—low cost for repair and maintenance—built by contractor with reputation for quality construction.

Two-car garage, with one room and lavatory overhead—detached from the house.

Kennel for dogs, with three runs, at rear of the lot—disguised by brick wall which has climbing roses.

Rock garden, fish pool, and open-air oven.

House features large studio living room, two tiled baths, ultra-modern kitchen, and basement recreation room with bar. Wood-burning fireplace.

Priced high at \$20,000, but owner will accept low down-payment, and a long-term mortgage at only 4% interest.

School one of the best in the area—special bus service for children.

Healthier place to live than in city—cooler in summer—always a nice breeze.

Five miles from 18 hole golf course—within walking distance of community shopping center.



Now the telephone rings. Cy Jerkins has heard about the suburban home. No, he isn't ready to look at it. His wife isn't too keen about living out there. No, he doesn't want to talk to Jasper. "Just give me the dope in a letter," says Mr. Jerkins, "and make it short—I'll let you know if we are interested."

*Matching needs and benefits.* Okay. Jasper Jones has a nibble, but it isn't a bite. What should he say in his letter to lure Mr. and Mrs. Jerkins to an inspection of the property? He begins to think about them (Step Three, Visualize the Reader) and what *they*, as apart from all other prospects, might want in a home (Step Four, Choose the Best Appeal).

It's all very simple. "I *sold* him today," boasts salesman Doe, but he didn't, really. A sale is nothing more than *matching needs and benefits*. When you can do that, the sale is inevitable.

Jasper Jones knows a lot about Jerkins and his wife. That will save him time. However, if they had been strangers, he would still need information about them before he writes his letter. How else could he select those advantages of the home which seem to fit the pattern of their peculiar needs? Well, what *does* he know about them?

Mr. and Mrs. Jerkins are renting a rather expensive apartment in the city. They are the type who spend most or all of their income. He is a consultant on advertising and sales problems, and writes for both business and fiction magazines. Their only child is married and lives in the East. Mrs. J. has quite a reputation as a bridge player. They both play golf—and, yes—they belong to the club only five miles from the Oak Ridge home. Dogs? Of course! Didn't Jasper read something in the paper last year about one of their Scotties winning "best in show"?

All right! Now Jasper has the two mental pictures—of the home and all its advantages, and—of the prospects and their possible soft spots. He is ready to make the blend. "And make it short," Cy Jerkins had said. Obviously, Jasper's problem is to choose carefully a few of the points most likely to strike fire—and he knows that is the most effective plan for *all* sales letters.

*Easy transportation?* Not important. Both Mr. and Mrs. Jerkins have their own automobiles.

*Restricted neighborhood?* Well, yes and no. Mrs. Jerkins is socially minded. But everybody knows Oak Ridge is first class. Skip it.

*Beautiful site?* Yes, they are the kind to whom that will appeal.

*Plans won first prize?* Yes, indeed, Mrs. Jerkins at least will love that point.



*Quality construction?* No. They will probably take it for granted.

*Two-car garage?* A necessary point, but not worth emphasis. What's that? Wait a moment. Maybe that room over the garage would be a swell place for Cy Jerkins to write. Yes—use that.

*Kennel?* Wonderful. They show dogs.

*Rock garden, pool, oven?* No, she is not the kind to stay home with her flowers.

*Large studio living room?* Good for her bridge parties. *Recreation room with bar?* Fine! He especially will like that. What man wouldn't?

*Low down-payment?* Yes. The price will appeal to their vanity, so long as they can swing the deal. Their monthly income is ample to meet the mortgage payments.

*School bus?* No. Their only child is an adult.

*Healthier place to live?* Doubtful. They are not old enough to be seriously health-minded. The breeze might appeal. No. "When in doubt, *don't*."

*Golf course near?* Yes, strong point. *Shopping center?* No. If anyone walks there, it will be the maid.

There you are. Jasper Jones has completed Steps Three and Four. From all the points that *could* be used, he has chosen the following as most likely to please Mr. and Mrs. Cy Jerkins:

1. Beautiful site
2. Plans won first prize
3. Room over garage
4. Kennel
5. Large studio living room
6. Recreation room with bar
7. Low down-payment and easy terms
8. Close to their golf club

*Co-ordination for best effect.* Is Jasper Jones now ready to write his letter? No, not yet. Step Five has not been taken. He could just start with point number one at the head of the list and go right through to number eight, but only by sheer luck could that be the *best* combination.

Which of the eight points is the strongest? Not just for *any* prospect, but for Mr. and Mrs. Cy Jerkins? The decision calls for judgment, and you might not agree, but Jasper's choice is number *seven*—low down-payment and easy monthly terms. He thinks that if the other points can make the Jerkins family want the home,



they might ask themselves, "How can we possibly afford it?" Jasper knows how, so he saves the answer to their question for a "clincher" at the end.

Okay! Which of the remaining points ranks next to number seven in strength of appeal? To Cy Jerkins alone, it might be number three. Perhaps for years he has dreamed of a hide-away place to work and write. Since Jasper isn't sure about it, he can't afford to take a chance. No, he wants to start his letter with a point which will gain immediate acceptance from *both* husband and wife. He finally decides to appeal to their pride—combination of number one and number two. Also, he thinks he may be able to work number eight into the first paragraph.

Thus, for the middle of his letter, Jasper has left only the room over the garage, the kennel, the studio living room, and the recreation room. He decides on the combination 5-6-4-3. At last—J. J. is ready to write. His plan has been carefully devised. Within the scope of his ability, he has prepared what seems to be the attack most likely to succeed.

Prize winner on beautiful site, close to golf club  
Large studio living room  
Recreation room with bar  
Room over garage  
Kennel  
Low down-payment and easy terms

Perhaps you are scowling. You say, "Who would take so much time and trouble, just to plan *one* business letter?" Well, the answer is "Who *wouldn't*?"—with so much at stake. The commission which Jasper Jones earns on a sale of property is 5 per cent, and the price of this one is \$20,000. How about it now? Wouldn't *you* gladly spend an hour, a day, or a week, if a commission of \$1,000 depended on the success of that one letter? Remember, the time you can afford to spend on one letter is determined by the nature of the problem, and the importance of getting it solved.

*The letter that sold the home.* So Jasper Jones writes the letter. He wonders if it should be mailed to the office of Cy Jerkins, or to his home; the latter seems best. He wants both husband and wife to read it together. He knows, too, that when homes are bought the man may *think* he has made the decision, but the one who *really* does it is the woman who lets him have that pleasure.

So much for this hypothetical example of planning a business letter. But what's a story without an end? Did the letter develop a sale? Well, we think it was mailed one morning and delivered that afternoon. At eight o'clock in the evening, Jasper Jones



reached the promised land. Came a voice over the wire, "Thanks for your letter . . . Mrs. Jerkins and I are not much interested . . . but we'll meet you there at ten in the morning."

No, not much interested, but the following afternoon the contract was signed. Good news for all—even the pups.

What did Jasper say in his letter? Well, you have his outline of points. Why don't you write it—something like this:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Jerkins:

I don't sell real estate. It's a lot more fun to find a perfect home, and then the people who *belong* in it—just as you folks surely do belong in the Oak Ridge home Mr. Jerkins asked me about.

When John Boardman, the famous architect, designed this prize winning home—the one not far from your golf course—he must have visualized it set in an acre of trees and shrubs as it does now—and folks like you who would love it as much as he did when drawing the plans.

Mr. Jerkins said I must make this letter short, so I can't begin to explain all the charm of this magnificent little home. You'll have to see it to appreciate what I mean.

You, Mrs. Jerkins, will be delighted with the studio living room with its huge fireplace—plenty of space for a dozen bridge tables without crowding. And you, Mr. Jerkins, would surely be a proud host in the tiled recreation room with its unusual bar. Then over the garage—this is a secret—is the perfect place for you to write your stories. If you are like me, you always have wanted a hide-away. Every man needs one, and especially a writer like you.

Maybe, too, Mr. Boardman was thinking of folks like you—or he just loved dogs and couldn't imagine a real home without them—when he designed the kennel so cleverly hidden behind a brick wall covered with climbing roses.

Of course, there is always one thing that comes up in finding a home—the price and terms. They may not be important to you, but the owner will accept a very low down-payment, and a mortgage for the balance with interest of only 4%.

Will you do me a favor? When you read this letter—perhaps at dinner tonight—multiply many, many times in your mental image of this home the few things I have said about it. Then call me tonight, and say when you'll have the thrill of seeing it.

I've got the keys, and can meet you there any time tomorrow. Please do call me—MAin 3343—as I'll wait until you do.

Sincerely yours,

Think before you write. Nothing worthwhile yields to human effort without a PLAN. The actual saying is easy. It's the plan-



ning *what* to say and *how* that determines how good your letter will be. When Abraham Lincoln was asked how he would write a speech if he had just fifteen minutes for the job, he replied, "Well, I would spend at least ten of the fifteen minutes planning what to write, and then I would use the last five minutes to write it."

Maybe it was a similar plan that the Reverend George Washington Abraham Lee used so successfully in getting so many converts for his church. Rival ministers witnessed his results with mingled jealousy and admiration. When questioned about the secret of his success, he said—"Fust ah tell 'em wut ah's gwine to tell 'em—den ah tells 'em—den ah tells 'em wut ah dun tole 'em." Amen, Parson Lee. You work with a PLAN.

## 2. *Blueprints for Letter-Building*

*One skeleton that they all possess.* In spite of the million and one variations in the blueprints from which business letters are constructed, there is one basic formula which all letters must follow, or else almost certainly they are doomed to fail. True, a writer may now and then risk another plan, but it rarely succeeds, and is then only the exception which proves the rule. Letters, like human beings, are built on a skeleton which has a striking similarity of form, although in "flesh and other attributes" they may seem totally unlike. No matter what kind of letters you write—sales, collection, or any of the others—you must always recognize the necessity of this "skeleton," and make sure it is there.

Many experts in the letter-world have devised figures of speech to describe this formula, skeleton, or whatever you may choose to call it. Even your grade-school teacher, when you were first being exposed to English Composition, had the formula in mind without a name for it, when she said that what you were trying to write must start with an Introduction, continue with a Body, and end with a Conclusion. She may or may not have made plain to you the "why" of these three parts, but it is improbable that you understood then the psychological purpose of each part, or the connection of the whole procedure with the influencing of human behavior.

*Dr. Dignan had a name for it.* The names for the three steps in letter-construction which seem to have persisted the longest, and for that reason may be the best, were invented years ago by Dr. Frank W. Dignan. He was one of the pioneers who taught that letters should be simple, friendly, and natural, and was a master who helped to inspire this Handbook.

Dr. Dignan said that every letter needed first a "Star"—some-



thing to be said in the beginning which would quickly capture the attention of the reader. If this could be accomplished, he reasoned, then the reader would be willing to go on to find out what else the letter had to tell him. Without the Star, unless the reader had a personal reason for wanting to continue, the letter would be pushed aside and no matter how interesting the rest of it might be, it would never be read.

The second of the three parts, and the one which did the major job, Dr. Dignan called the "Chain,"—a series of facts which would change the reader's casual attention to a real and sustained interest. This meant, of course, that each link—each fact—in the Chain had to be strong, for interest also can easily be interrupted, and when that happened, the reader would be gone.

Finally, said the old master, a letter needs something to impel the desired action—a final urge which would make the reader send the check or buy the goods. This he called the "Hook." A hook grabs and holds fast. The reader no longer can escape the issue. As he read through the Chain there was always the danger that he might stop before the story had been told, but now he knows what you want. He can still decide either way, but if the Hook is strong, he is inclined to say "Yes."

"The Star, the Chain, and the Hook"—easy to remember, isn't it? Just like your watch-chain, with the watch on one end and a pocket-knife on the other!

First, get the reader's favorable *attention*. Do it deliberately with an opening paragraph which is bright and brisk—the *Star*.

Second, follow quickly with a flow of facts, reasons, benefits, all selected and placed in the best order to transform attention to real *interest*, and finally to *desire*—that's the *Chain*.

Third, suggest *action*, and make it as easy as possible—the *Hook*.

Attention . . . interest . . . desire . . . action! These are the four psychological reactions in the mind of your reader, and they happen *in that order* as he takes your letter from the envelope, begins to read, continues through the several paragraphs, and finally arrives at the last period. Obviously, it is a *progressive* process, each step paving the way for the next. Attention increases until it blends into interest. Interest deepens until desire is aroused. Desire, when strong and bold, leads to action. Hence, your letter is planned to stimulate those mental reactions, and each part does a *separate* job. If the Star does get favorable attention, nothing more should be expected of it. Developing interest and desire is the job of the Chain, but it does not reach for action. You still



have a player on the bench with an eagle eye, and you use him to shoot the last winning basket. He is the Hook.

So you see the co-ordination between your efforts and the mental response of the reader. Cold, lukewarm, warm, hot—attention, interest, desire, action! The steps *must* be in that order.

*Using the Star, the Chain, and the Hook.* Although they deal with different situations, and have little affinity in either content or style, the following letters are all built on similar “skeletons.” In each example, you can see how the writer has tried to lead the reader from attention→to interest→to desire→to ACTION. The first is a sales letter mailed by the Pangborn Corporation, Hagerstown, Maryland.

### IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE THAT COUNT

And We Don't  
Mean *Maybe!*

A cinder in the eye . . .

Gets more attention than a coal barge on the Ohio River. And a tiny pebble in his boot will cause a hunter more grief than a big bear.

Yes—it's the little things in life that count— that are important—that bring quickest reactions. (End of the Star.)

Take the blast cleaning division of a company, for instance. What could be more important than the operator's safety helmet, the air blast hose he uses, the nozzles, and the steel shot and grit? Yet these items are small—the “accessories” to the blast cleaning machines.

Yet in June, July and August, when the temperature reaches 92 degrees in the shade, what could be more important than the comfort, weight, and fresh air feed of your operator's blast helmet? Or the long wearing life of a GOOD blast cleaning nozzle? Or the extra thickness of the rubber lining in the air blast hose? Or the reliability of size, and the toughness and strength of the steel abrasives?

These are some of the little things in blast cleaning life that really count—that pay a tremendous return in satisfaction and production and profit, when they are RIGHT—and just as you want them. (End of the Chain.)

That's why we ask you to “come to Pangborn” now. For over forty years, we have specialized in providing the BEST BLAST CLEANING EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES—and we will be happy to serve your needs now—promptly and carefully. Just drop us a note *today*. (End of Hook.)

Very truly yours,

(Signed by Victor F. Stine, Vice-President in charge of Sales)



The following letter was used to revive inactive customers. The Star supplies the theme for the whole message, and since the readers already knew about the products and services of the company, the Chain plays a minor role.

Gentlemen:

I feel just like the Irishman who dashed up to a hotel desk one evening—hat gone, and clothes all streaked with dirt.

"I want room thirty-seven," he shouted.

"But I can't give you room thirty-seven," said the clerk, after looking at the board.

"I tell you, I want room thirty-seven," was the rising reply.

"But room thirty-seven is taken. Mr. Murphy has that room."

"Don't I know it? I'm Murphy. I jist fell out av the winder, and I want to git back in again." (End of Star.)

Yes, I feel something like that, and I want to get back in the room, where you give out your orders for printing.

It's been a mighty long time since we've had the pleasure of serving you, Mr. Doe, and it certainly would make us happy to see your name back on our books.

Our equipment is modern and complete. We have both the facilities for doing good printing, and the will to give you the best of service. (End of Chain.)

There's a blotter enclosed with our telephone number on it in nice bold figures. Why not do unto us as you would unto Murphy. Give us a ring when you need your next printing job. (End of Hook.)

Cordially yours,

Collection letters, too, contain the Star, the Chain, and the Hook—first, something to put the reader in a good mood, then the reasons why he should pay, and last, either a request for the money, or a statement of what will happen if he doesn't pay. The emphasis on the three steps varies considerably in collection letters—depending on the age of the unpaid account, and what the company intends to do about it. Usually, the Hook is most important, but in the following letter, the Star is made to do most of the work.

You know, Mr. Doe,

When your grandfather, and mine, made a business deal, it was done a little differently than we do now. If he needed a span of mules, he drove over to his neighbor's house and made a trade. "Say, George," he said, "what'll you take for that team?"



"Well, Henry," the neighbor replied thoughtfully, "I'll take \$25."

Grandpa looked over those mules again, and then replied, "I'll take 'em, if you'll wait ninety days for your money."

"Sold!" the owner said immediately, because he knew that Grandpa always paid his debts, and that Grandpa's word was his bond.

That was the end of the deal. And in ninety days, nobody had to write Grandpa to pay that debt, either. When the time was up, he went over to George's house and laid \$25 on the kitchen table. He didn't pay that bill because he was afraid he'd be sued if he didn't. He paid it because HE SAID HE WOULD. And, neither "hell nor high water" would keep him from making his word good. (End of Star)

That bill you owe us was due some time ago, but it hasn't been paid. Maybe you have been waiting to get all the money together to send in at one time. But this delay works hardship on us as well as you.

So, if you don't have all the balance to send in, mail us part of it. That will be better than nothing at all, and it will at least show that you, like Grandpa, are trying to do WHAT YOU SAID YOU WOULD.

Yours for Pioneer Spirit,

That letter was used successfully by the Panther Oil & Grease Manufacturing Company, Fort Worth, Texas. The appeal is based on pride in family reputation, but cleverly the reader is allowed to make his own comparison between himself and Grandpa.

Here is another collection letter in which the Star is not so prominent, although the comparison with the game of checkers reappears in both the Chain and the Hook.

Gentlemen:

Modern business is like a game of checkers.

Everybody gets a turn. First it's your move. Then the other fellow's. Sometimes you win a checker, and sometimes you lose. But move you must . . . or pay the penalty and forfeit the game.

Business is conducted according to similar rules. We sell merchandise and service. That's our move. You have thirty days grace before you make the next move and send us a check. It's the rule. (End of Star.)

Unfortunately, something has interfered with the play of the game, and of late we've been making *all* of the moves. Now there is only one more. You know what it is. We believe we have been more than fair by asking you time and time again



what the trouble is. We'd like to continue to give you the benefit of the doubt, but we cannot.

*We must appeal to the referee* so we can collect our forty-two dollars.

It isn't too late for you to enter the game again and somehow, we can't help but feel that your intentions are of the best and that you will respond to this last appeal. (End of Chain.)

A check is called for, but a letter will go a long way toward making us feel that you are still playing the game squarely. Please act today because whether it's checks or checkers, the rules play no favorites.

Remember, it's YOUR move. Let's get together once again. Obey that impulse now and tell us your side of the story or better yet, say it with a check.

Sincerely,

Even short, routine letters can easily be fitted to the Star, the Chain, and the Hook, as is the following "reminder." The bill is not old, and there is no reason for a long letter. However, it starts gaily, states the necessary facts, and ends with a gentle request for action.

The Star to capture ATTENTION	The letter S is made up, as you know, of curved lines, but look what a straight and narrow path does for it . . . \$.
The Chain to state the FACTS	And good old Uncle Sam will bring your check for \$58.00, in payment of our January 31 invoice, straight to our door.
A Hook to ask ACTION	Why not send it along, and then we'll all be happy.

There are only fifty-seven words in the above letter, but some credit men would still insist it is far too long. They would ask one question—"Will you please send us your check for \$58.00, in payment of your invoice of January 31?"—and call it a good job. Others, more reckless with their time, might add "Thank you," but nothing more. The difference in the effectiveness of the two letters could only be measured by *results*. If each of the two letters were sent to identical groups of one hundred customers, which would pull the highest percentage of checks, and in the shortest time? Personally, we vote for the longer one, because it is the more interesting.

*Relation of length to difficulty.* "Long enough to do the job," is how long a business letter should be (Section 2), but certainly the problem of *holding* reader-interest becomes more difficult as the



length increases. Irrespective of how many pages a letter may run, the Star and the Hook tend to remain short. The burden of keeping interest alive falls upon the Chain. Every point added is another link, and the letter-writer is ever reminded of the adage, "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link." He hates to omit a point that might help his cause, and yet he knows that when the reader is bored, the cause is lost.

Some of the best *longer letters* seen in business correspondence are those which seek to obtain magazine subscriptions. The writers probably wish they could do the job in a few short paragraphs, but they know one or two points about a magazine will not heat the water to a boil. They are forced to tell a longer story, even at the risk of letting the fire go out. That hazard, of course, they fight hard and cleverly to avoid.

*A long letter that moves swiftly.* The following letter was used by *Time* to sell introductory subscriptions. About three-fifths of the copy is devoted to the Chain. Is your interest sustained from link to link? Or does it falter at any specific place?

Dear Reader:

Joe Stalin drinks his vodka straight.

Marian Anderson sings with her eyes closed.

Of course you know that Albert Einstein fathered the Relativity Theory—but did you know he frequently does arithmetic homework for the children in his neighborhood?

Tom Dewey keeps a fly swatter in his desk at New York's Executive Mansion—and uses it constantly . . . Jimmie Durante keeps an encyclopaedia in his bathroom . . . President Roxas of the Philippines smokes five packs of cigarets a day—Trygve Lie hunts moose—and Phumiphon, King of Siam, yearns to study in Switzerland.

There is a big reason why *TIME* for 24 years now has been *reporting the news in terms of the people who make it*—and the reason is this:

*TIME* thinks it's the one best way to accomplish the single job *TIME* was invented to do—

Get the important and interesting news of the world into the head of an intelligent person—and *make it stick!*

And that is why *TIME* tells the news as a tremendous serial story whose leading characters are the great and the near-great of the whole wide world—in politics and diplomacy, science and industry, literature, medicine and the arts.

These are the giants who make the news—and even as you read this they are making the raw material for *TIME's* next 52



issues—making it strong and exciting and colorful. But the little men and women who get catapulted into fame every so often are also making news—and every week you find *their* stories in *TIME*. (Nobody knows *what* stories—by *what* authors in *what* issues. *For the news is unpredictable.*)

\* \* \*

And so is *TIME*. But one thing about *TIME* *can* be foretold. The year *TIME* is about to chronicle will be a pivotal year—a year when great forces, on the move for many months, will meet in the headlines—a year when things not dreamed of now will fill columns in your papers and hours on your radio.

This news will be important to all of us—for it will affect all of us—and much of it will be difficult to understand and bewildering to follow.

So try *TIME* for yourself—and see why *TIME*'s human, personal, sense-making reports make *TIME* the *favorite* magazine of doctors, bankers, architects, engineers, of the famous men listed in *Who's Who* and more than 1,500,000 alert, intelligent families like yours from coast to coast!

*Try TIME at the Special Introductory Rate that saves you \$1.11 by bringing you eight full months of TIME for only \$3.27.*

For these 35 copies would cost you \$4.38 at the regular subscription price of \$6.50 a year—or \$7 if you bought them on the newsstand!

But this special saving is available for a limited time only. So please sign the enclosed postage-paid card and *airmail* it right back to me today.

Cordially,

Circulation Director

In general you probably agree that *Time* is well sold in the foregoing letter. The reader is taken swiftly from link to link in the Chain, and when the Hook begins his thirst for news is strong.

The writer, however, did take one dangerous chance in his long letter; he let the reader know early that he would be asked to buy a subscription. Letting the cat out of the bag *before* desire has been aroused, may often terminate the reading of a sales letter. Nevertheless, this particular message is so interesting that the odds are in its favor. It must have done the job.

*The Hook to impel action.* Some letters in business ask for no reply, and are purely routine in nature—acknowledgments of orders, carriers of checks, expressions of goodwill, answers containing requested information, and others. Most of the important ones—those written to sell, or collect, or adjust—do reach out for a favor-



able response. No matter how interesting and convincing such a letter may be, you will agree it is wasted unless the desired reader-reaction is attained. Many letters, like race horses, get away from the post beautifully, lead most of the way, but falter coming down the stretch. The cause of their failure is the weakness of the Hook.

There is an old saying, often heard in sales meetings, that "the way to get an order is to *ask* for it." This thought neatly fits all business letters in which an attempt is made to influence human behavior. To get action, you must *ask* for it. Furthermore, you must ask with the implied confidence that a favorable reply is expected. The end of your letter is not the place for timidity or lack of faith. Assuming that you *believe* what has been said in the Chain, and that what you are asking is to the benefit of the reader, why should anything else but the desired reaction be expected?

The situation at the end of the letter is quite different from what it was at the beginning. First, you had to get the reader's attention. He was cold, indifferent. You had to pull something out of the bag that would quicken his pulse, make him willing to continue. Then you presented fact after fact (link after link) to arouse interest and build desire. Hence, if the Chain was strong and convincing, the reader is thinking as you think when it comes time for the Hook. He is ready to go along with you, and does not resent being "told" as he would have earlier in the letter. Often, he stands on top of the fence, but needs a little "push" to make him jump in the right direction. That's your job, and the "how" of it is to be explained later in this section.

*Which is the most important?* Sometimes, the question is asked, "Which is the most important in writing a successful business letter—the Star, the Chain, or the Hook?" Well, which does you the most good—breakfast, luncheon, or dinner? The difficulty in rating the comparative importance of the three parts is that each does a *separate* job, and each must be judged by a separate set of standards. If one of the three parts is poorly constructed, then the whole letter is a failure. The three parts team together to score the touchdown; one opens a hole in the line, one blocks, and the other carries the ball. *All* are important.

To be sure, the *first* job is to open the hole in the line. That's done by the Star. Unless the hole is there, the blocker and the ball-carrier are stopped. But if the blocker fails to get his man, or if the ball is fumbled, the play still fails. So you see why the Star, the Chain, and the Hook cannot be rated comparatively. Each part is an independent function which contributes to the success of the whole.



*Other comparisons.* We have chosen the figure of speech used by Dr. Dignan as the one which best describes the three parts of a business letter. There are others with which you may wish to be familiar, however. One of the experts compares the writing of an effective letter to a successful flight in an airplane. First comes the take-off—getting the reader's attention. Once in the air, the pilot follows his course as swiftly as possible—the time when interest is quickened, and desire awakened. Finally, comes the landing, end of the flight—request for action. The analogy is good, because each of the three operations is quite different from the others—just as the three parts of a business letter are different in function, and in the skills needed to complete them.

In the Dartnell publication, *American Business*, the writing of a business letter was once compared to setting off a giant fire-cracker. The description was as follows:

The flame of the match is the opening paragraph. It gets the reader's attention—makes him want to see what is going to happen next. Once lit, the fuse should burn steadily. The flame is carried along to that exciting moment when it reaches the powder.

Well, so must the interest of the reader be carried along to the end of the letter. Back in the days when we were kids, you can remember the suspense of those few seconds while the fuse was burning. There must be the same suspense in a letter. A defective fuse means that the flame stops burning. Sometimes, in the middle of a letter the reader's interest is also extinguished.

And finally, the cracker is fired. Bang! It is the climax of an interesting experience. But the crackers don't always explode. Some fizzle and sputter—others are complete duds. So it is with the closing paragraphs of a business letter. They either go off with a bang, or they fizzle. The reader is sold, or he is lost.

Flame—fuse—fire! Those are the three steps in writing a business letter.

Another comparison, more applicable to sales letters than to the others, is the one of the five "P's." The idea is that the writer of a business letter must in the following order—please, picture, prove, promise, and push. This conforms very well with the other comparisons.

Please	}	.....	get Attention
Picture		.....	Interest
Prove		.....	to
Promise		.....	Desire
Push		.....	Action



Okay! You have seen that there are three parts in a business letter; that all combine to do the job, but that each is quite different in function and the manner of execution. Naturally, your mind now turns to "HOW." *How* is attention gained? *How* are interest and desire developed? *How* is action impelled?

### 3. *How to Get Reader's Attention*

*Value of the first impression.* One of America's leading letter authorities is Frank H. Roy, Correspondence Supervisor for Montgomery Ward & Co. In one of his bulletins to Montgomery Ward letter-writers, Mr. Roy says: "A letter to the reader is a great deal like a conversation. A letter drags just like a conversation that is dull unless there is some spirit and life in the opening paragraph. The question with most of us is—'How can I liven up my starting paragraph? What appeal can I use that will be so interesting the reader wants to go on?' The first impression your reader gets from your letter is very important. You can open the door graciously or you can slam it in his face, and all you can say in your remaining paragraphs will be of little value."

Mr. Roy is absolutely on the beam. First impressions, by personal contact or by letter, are extremely important. You are introduced to a stranger, and before he utters a word an impression has been formed which will tend to persist as long as you know him. You pull a letter out of an envelope, and before a line has been read, you have formed an impression of its general appearance which may influence, favorably or otherwise, your final reaction. Then, that first quick impression is strengthened or weakened by what you read in the first paragraph.

There are many factors that contribute to the appearance of a business letter—the quality of the paper, the design and printing of the letterhead, the way it is typed, the signature—but they will be explained in Section 4. What we want to know now is *in what ways in the beginning of a letter can attention be captured?*

"*Get off to a flying start.*" This is the advice of William H. Butterfield, the author of numerous books on business correspondence. In one of them, *Goodwill Letters that Build Business*,\* he writes: "If all the preliminary steps have been handled effectively, the reader approaches the first sentence with at least a spark of casual interest. The opening sentence applies the fuel that either ignites the spark or smothers it. The application must be immediate, too, for the average reader allows a letter only a few

\* New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940.



seconds in which to prove its interest to him. This means that the lead-off sentence must 'click.' "

In the book, *Modern Business English*, by Babenroth and Parkhurst,\* we read: "The purpose of the first sentence is to win the reader's attention. Upon its power to interest him depends his willingness to read further. . . . The attention-getter must be brief, attractive, and appropriate. Because a long paragraph is heavy and uninviting, the first paragraph should always be short."

There is hardly a person who will throw a letter away without reading a word, *unless* he recognizes the letterhead, guesses what it is about, and from previous correspondence is utterly indifferent to the content. Usually there is an element of curiosity which forces him to take at least a quick peep at the opening paragraph. If he finds something there of interest to *him*, he is quite likely to continue. If not, another letter has died in infancy—another postage stamp has been used in vain. As Butterfield says, only a few seconds will decide what happens. You get him quick, or you get him not at all.

*A poor place for whiskers.* In view of this necessity for a fast start—something to change casual attention to at least a small degree of interest—it must be apparent that whiskers, as you saw them in Section 2, are strictly taboo in the Star of a business letter. Who would not yawn on reading, "Your kind favor of recent date has duly come to hand," or "With reference to your esteemed communication, we would wish to state"? Who would go a word farther?

"We have your favored epistle of the 21st instant, and have read same with considerable embarrassment."

"I have just read your letter—and is my face red!"

Which of those two opening sentences would arouse the most interest? Which would be most likely to spur the reader on? If you have no special design for capturing interest, at least be sure to remember the slogan—"Relax . . . be natural . . . just talk."

*Taking advantage of previous contacts.* In those cases where you know your reader, or by letter or in person have had previous contacts with him, there may often be a mutual interest that tends to get the letter off to a good start. "It doesn't seem possible that two years have passed since we took time off at the Milwaukee convention to bowl together—but I still remember how you pinned my ears back." A sentence like that would be sure to get you off to a flying start, but it wouldn't have been so good had the reader's ears

\* New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1942.



been pinned instead of yours. Nevertheless, any contact which has been pleasant is quite useful as an attention-winner.

Your letters always make good reading—that last one was a whangdoodle.

Hello, Mr. Gordon. Remember me? We met last week at the University Club, and you told me about your dogs, and all the ribbons they have won.

Our mutual friend, George Davis, wants the three of us to play golf together soon. In the meantime, I need your opinion on a problem in our business.

Last summer, when I camped near Nisswa, in Minnesota, your son was my guide on several fishing trips. I have never seen anyone cast as well as he does. One day we were talking about your business and mine. Bob thought we should get together.

To be sure, it requires no particular skill to start a letter, when the gate is already wide open. On the other hand, when these personal contacts are available, it would be foolish not to take advantage of them.

*A tip from newspaper reporters.* When you know your letter is going to an individual or group that should be interested in the contents—if time is taken to digest them—newspaper reporters have a plan which you could well afford to copy. In the first paragraph of most news stories an effort is made to summarize all that is to follow. This is called the “lead” and it contains the five “W’s”—Who, What, When, Where, and Why. Thus, the lead is really a preview of the story, and the reader goes on to get the details.

This morning at nine o'clock (WHEN), crazed with jealousy (WHY), John Doe, local dentist (WHO), returned to his former home at 1010 West Broad Street (WHERE), and killed his divorced wife with a hatchet (WHAT).

That's newspaper style, and it can be very effective in starting certain kinds of business letters. Say the head of a retail organization wants to announce a sale in a letter to customers. He believes the values are outstanding, and that any reader is sure to be interested if he takes time to read about them. To assure that happy circumstance, it seems best to hand out the good news just as quickly as possible.



Beginning next Monday morning, and as long as they last (WHEN), in order to clear our shelves for summer stock (WHY), the Carlson Company (WHO), at all of our six stores in the Twin Cities (WHERE), will sell all remaining winter shoes at exactly half-price (WHAT).

Details about the sale, that it was only for old customers who brought the letter with them, and something about the types and brands available, could follow later. The biggest inducement—Half-Price—can be counted on to arouse interest, especially in old customers who have been buying shoes at the Carlson stores and know their quality.

*Use of a question.* There is something about a question that seems to demand an answer. This fact is well known to speakers and schoolteachers. When they see a yawn coming up, they simply ask the offender a question. In that way, he is quickly brought back to the world of reality. It's an old, old method of getting attention, and it works just as well for the letter-writer.

Of course, there are questions and questions, and like everything else pertaining to business letters, they need to be used with intelligence and discretion. Merely to ask a question, tell a story, or state an interesting fact, knowing there is little or no connection between what you are saying and the "meat" of the letter, is an insult to the reader. You are then merely a trickster, and even if you gain momentary attention, it will surely be lost when the reader discovers you have "taken him for a ride."

But when appropriate to the subject matter, in keeping with good taste, and not "wild and woolly," a question can capture immediate attention, and help to hold it as the meaning develops. Here are a few "stoppers" that might induce you to keep on reading. They are all taken from successful business letters.

"People do the darndest things, don't they?" . . . Yes, you agree, but just what in particular does he mean?

"Do you know that if you were to take one penny, and double your money each day for thirty days, you would then have more than five million dollars?" . . . No, you probably didn't, but the thought is pleasant. You may even start figuring to see if it is true.

"Can you keep a secret for \$500?" . . . You bet, but he had better not be kidding. I'll read on to find out.

"Can fish tell one color from another?" . . . Well, if not, why do fishermen carry all those colored flies and gadgets?



"Would you think a man could make a million dollars selling onion plants by mail?" . . . No, I wouldn't, but maybe this fellow had a secret for getting rich that I should know.

"Do you know what a dozen eggs, a bottle of milk, or a loaf of bread will cost next month, next year, or in half a century?" . . . No, but if this fellow does, you would like to be cut in on the secret.

"Wouldn't you like, with our compliments, to have a new road map which tells you in a jiffy the best routes between thousands of cities in the United States and Canada?" . . . Yes, I would. I'll read on to find out how to get one.

Probably all of those questions got favorable attention, but you couldn't tell whether or not there was an appropriate connection with what followed. On the next page is the whole of the letter which started with the rather vague but interesting question, "People do the darndest things, don't they?" Stop, and read that letter now.

All right, what's the verdict? Is there a logical tie-up between the Star and what followed? Well, yes, but you have to reason it out. The man shot another fellow for kissing his wife, although he had neglected that goodwill gesture for five years. In the same way, the two business executives were angry at the disloyal customers who also had been neglected. Really, you are supposed to think, neither wife nor customer was very much to blame. If you feel inclined to call the connection far-fetched, don't overlook the fact that the letter *did* do a successful job.

There was one question among those quoted which had a double pull—"Can fish tell one color from another?" Fishermen are great fellows to talk about their favorite sport, and in the hands of one of them, the letter would be sure to arouse interest.

*An interesting fact.* One of the most deep-seated traits of human nature is curiosity. It is often said that a reporter must have a nose for news. In our opinion, all people have it. They especially like to hear about facts they did not know before—unusual facts—anything to relieve what might otherwise be the monotony of everyday existence. If this were not so, why are the gossip purveyors in newspapers and on radio programs so popular? Why do people flock to the museums, read travel books about strange places, go miles out of their way to see a two-headed calf, or pay to see the freaks in the circus side-show? Yes, we all have a bump of curiosity big as a mountain, if only it could be seen.

It is this thirst to be informed, to pry into things we do not un-





Dear Mr. Kamprath:

People do the darndest things, don't they?

We know of a man who hadn't kissed his wife in five years. . .and then shot another fellow who did.

A few days ago I overheard two business men grouching because their customers were so disloyal. . .persisted in switching their orders to competing houses. Yet neither one of those men had ever taken the trouble to thank a customer for his business, or wish him "Merry Christmas".

Maybe loyalty and friendship are supposed to work only one way. But I always figured that a person couldn't expect to receive friendship unless he gave friendship in return.

That's why I feel that a warm, personal, whole-hearted message to customers at Christmas-time is one of the best investments any firm can make. The Holidays are one time of the year when the average man drops his guard a little. He's a bit more susceptible to overtures of friendship. He's more inclined to take the wish for what it is. . .a sincere expression of good will and appreciation.

In the last few years, our organization has helped hundreds of business men plan and prepare Christmas greetings to customers. . .individual messages as friendly as a Newfoundland pup at a picnic. Greetings that stand out in the mind of the people who receive them, long after other greetings are forgotten.

This year your customers will appreciate knowing that you look upon them as something more than just animated dollar signs. Let us help you prepare a really outstanding Christmas message to them. We are ready to start any time that you give us the word. Just call ATLANTIC 4457, or drop the enclosed card in the mail.

Cordially yours,  
BURGESS-BECKWITH, Inc.

*M. C. Burgess*

MCBurgess:ev

**BURGESS-BECKWITH, Inc., 426 South Sixth Street, Minneapolis, Minn.**

derstand, which has lifted man above the level of other animals. The cow seems not to care what other cows are doing. She chews her cud complacently all day long and is no wiser at the end than at the beginning. The sow wallows in the mud, and is content to stay there. Man looks about for new worlds to conquer. He is never quite so happy as when he contemplates something out of the ordinary, or when he reflects about some choice bit of information which later he can proudly pass on to others.



If you agree that the above is true, then you understand why letter-writers so often begin their messages with a few bizarre notes—statements of unusual or not commonly known facts to satisfy the instinctive craving for news which they know is shared by all their readers. Sometimes, the fact is offered plain and without sauce, sometimes it takes the form of a story, but, either way, the effect is to gain reader-interest. He may feel pleased to have had such a choice piece of information. He returns the favor by going on with the letter. But woe to the writer if the fact used as bait is *not* new to the reader, or *not* interesting. Then he is bored, as from the ninety-ninth telling of Uncle Ezra's Civil War story, and his opinion of the writer promptly falls below zero.

Here are some Stars of the factual type. You may judge from your own reading how interesting they may have been to those who originally received the letters.

"Is Sing, the fish dealer, crazy?" an American asked a Chinese friend, when he saw Sing carrying a lighted lantern in broad daylight.

"No, that is only the custom," was the reply. "It means Sing has not been able to pay his debts. Chinese New Year began a week ago, but he may exchange no New Year's greetings until he has settled—and until then, he must carry the lantern."

(This was a good story when first used several years ago. By now, it has probably lost its punch.)

Effinghaus, one of the first to study the antics of the human mind, gave us his famous "Chart of Forgetting." Briefly, it is this:

Thirty minutes after we have read something, we forget at least half of the subject matter. In eight hours, two-thirds is forgotten. And what is more surprising, we forget more in the first thirty minutes than in the next thirty days.

(This is interesting, but is it true? We will have to consult the most up-to-date psychologists. Surely no statement *should* be quoted until it has been verified.)

We once heard about a man in China called "I" and of another fellow whose last name is "Hurrizzissteizzii." That's going from one extreme to the other.

(Interesting. Again, could it be true?)

Take your ruler, and measure off 1/100,000 of an inch. Got it? That's how closely the diameter of the filament wire in an ordi-



nary G. E. Mazda lamp has to be measured. It can't vary more than one one-hundred-thousandth of an inch.

(Used originally by the Graybar Electric Company, Inc.)

You can do it in the rain without an umbrella—in a hovel, a palace, or under a weeping willow. It is the supreme luxury, enjoyed by the poor and the rich. It starts revolutions, wars, tyrannies, banks, businesses, explorations—and *stops* them.

It is the beginning and end of civilization. They can abolish the movies, the stage, dinner parties, art galleries, musical instruments, and you'd still have it.

It is God's greatest gift to mankind . . .

(The next word gave away the secret. Are you curious?)

"He is not worth his salt."

Our word "salary" and its definitions—wages, pay, stipend, compensation—were derived from the Latin word, "salarium," which means "of salt." In the days of Caesar, the Roman soldiers received part of their pay in salt. Hence the saying—"He is not worth his salt."

(Interesting. And how would you like this payment plan?)

Sportsmen the world over will never forget Black Gold, winner of the Kentucky Derby way back in 1924. In size he was a peewee, but there never ran a thoroughbred with a bigger heart. And yet, it isn't his victory in the Derby that gave Black Gold immortality.

Many years have passed since he went to the post for his last race, but strong men who were at the track that day are not ashamed of tears when they tell you what happened.

Coming down the stretch . . .

(To lovers of the Sport of Kings, this is an especially interesting Star, but any reader would continue to find out what happened "coming down the stretch.")

The worst thing about a budget is that it will not stretch.

(Nothing unusual about this one, except that most people have budget troubles, and this beginning suggests the writer may have a solution for the difficulty.)

Yesterday it was I . . . tomorrow it may be you—the next day someone dear to you. Certain it is that one of us in eight, on reaching middle-age, will die from this disease.



(Scare copy, but the shadow of death hovers over all of us, and we reach out for any means that may stay the sentence.)

. . . . .

Nine times out of ten, the horse that jumps the lead when the barrier is sprung is the first one under the wire.

(Provocative at least, because observation at numerous tracks makes the assertion doubtful. Anyway, you can't use the statement as a tip for betting—who knows which horse will get away first?)

Alhamodillah!

In every land, men go to their daily tasks in the morning, work a fixed number of hours, and return to their homes at eventide. Their only interest in the work is that it brings them the wherewithal to buy food and clothing for themselves and their families.

Not so in the East. Here a man's work is part of a religious routine. Each man's craft is handed down to him, unchanged through the generations. It is his joy and pride. His sole interest is to do his stint better than his neighbor, and good enough to merit the appreciation of Allah.

(This Star started a letter to sell oriental rugs, and was conceived by a great letter-writer, Jules Livingston.)

A small boy in Clay Center, Kansas, is able to predict rain with uncanny accuracy. He finds that ginger snaps get soft a few hours before the rain arrives.

A certain old man of Hancock, New Hampshire, reports that rain can be expected when the curls of his beard begin to straighten out.

(A lot of people are self-appointed weather experts.)

. . . . .

One of the most brilliant editors of his time once said that the only thing he feared was going stale. Curiously enough, this editor, reputed to have earned as high as \$100,000 a year, died a broken man, dependent on friends. He paid the penalty of going stale on the job.

(Naturally, the reader wants to know what happened.)

. . . . .

The Supreme Court of the United States once defined Goodwill thusly: "Goodwill is the disposition of the customer to return to the place where he has been well served."

(Decisions of any supreme body seem to interest the human beings who may be subjected to them.)



In the South Sea Islands, deep-chested natives dive time after time, bringing up great handfuls of oysters in the hope that some of them may contain pearls.

There is no way of telling which oysters *do* bear pearls, and the oysters themselves are strangely reticent. A diver may work for hours without acquiring more than the basis for a stew. But the law of averages dictates that every so often he *will* find a pearl . . . and the more oysters he brings up the more pearls he will find.

Your business, like ours, is based on that old law of averages.

(A Star used by Burgess-Beckwith, Inc. for a letter stressing the importance of continuous contacts with possible buyers.)

It's impossible—but it happened—near Anoka, Minnesota.

A tornado sucked an automobile off a highway and hurled it through the air for 100 yards. Sometimes it flew as high as the telephone wires. Then it was dashed to the earth and rolled over pasture land for a quarter of a mile. At intervals, bodies were hurled out to sprawl limply in the field. All five passengers were killed. The car was a twisted, shapeless mass of junk metal.

(Another queer trait of human nature is the attraction held by horror stories. Many magazines take advantage of this fact—so do some letter-writers, especially when about to offer the preventive for such evils.)

Interesting facts to fit various letter-situations are valuable but hard to acquire on the spur of the moment. A fine plan is to keep a notebook in which facts for future possible use are recorded. Every business correspondent should have a scrapbook of such material. You never know when it will provide the inspiration for a good letter.

*Interesting stories make good Stars.* Most people are story-minded. You often see them huddled in the office, on the street, while a new one is being told. It is all right to take advantage of this human interest, *providing* your story is fresh, not "off-color," and that it fits the message of the rest of the letter. Unless the story does comply with these requirements, the reader's reaction will be negative, and more harm than good is done by the letter.

For example, consider the following letter inviting dealers to attend a meeting.

Gentlemen:

A farmer, after selling his produce in the city, planned to surprise his wife. He bought a new suit of clothes, a new hat, and a new pair of shoes, carefully placing the bundle under the buggy seat.



On the homeward journey, he pulled up beside the river, tied his horse, took off his old clothes, and threw them in. After a good swim, he enthusiastically reached for his new togs. **THEY WERE GONE.** Finally, he climbed into his buggy and said, "Well, we will *surprise* her anyhow."

There will certainly be a **REAL WORTHWHILE SURPRISE** in store for you at the Springfield Dealers' School on November 19th and 20th. With any number of new ideas and new sales plans to create profits for you, the program will be of real growth calibre.

Every phase of live stock and poultry feeding will be covered. Animal nutrition, advertising, and merchandising—each feed will be discussed individually. The vision of your possibilities will broaden and you will profit greatly by investing just a few days in a close study of new improved selling and business methods.

The return of the attached card **WITH YOUR SIGNATURE** will assure your firm representation in every session.

Sincerely,

Was the story used in this letter a good one? Did it tie in with what followed? Well, "no" to both questions. The story is very old, and nine out of ten people would have heard it. Moreover, the only connection between it and the Chain is the far-fetched play on the word "surprise": the farmer's wife would be surprised—so will the reader if he attends the meetings.

This one is better. It was used by the Equitable Paper Bag Company, Inc., as a follow-up to prospects who had ignored previous letters. The author was Colman O'Shaughnessy.

Gentlemen:

Val Briggens once stood in the heart of Times Square selling five dollar bills for \$2.98. They were real honest-to-goodness five dollar bills—complete with Abe Lincoln's picture and Hank Morgenthau's signature. But there were no sales.

You can't fool New Yorkers.

And we haven't been able to fool you into inquiring about our low envelope prices.

Our prices on open-end catalog envelopes *are* unbelievably low. But we do make a lot of sales because a lot of people know we have our own paper mill, a large improved factory, and they know we have the lowest possible selling cost. In short, they know *why* our prices are the lowest they find anywhere.

In a letter like this, it's hard for me to back up my low price statement with specific figures—for I don't know what envelopes you use, or in what quantities you order.



But I would very much like to show you. If you'll just take samples of your present envelopes, mark them with the quantities you usually order, and put the whole business in the enclosed postage-paid envelope, I'll shoot you figures by return mail.

And when you see the high quality of our samples, you'll have the surprise of your envelope life.

Sincerely,

Assuming that you had not heard about Val Briggen's unsuccessful attempt to sell New Yorkers, the story must have been interesting. Furthermore, it illustrates a point made in the rest of the letter. The reader has been turning *his* back on a good thing, just as did the New Yorkers.

*More introductions by O'Shaughnessy.* The technique of starting business letters to capture reader attention—a device *deliberately* used by the experts—is demonstrated in some more Stars taken from Colman O'Shaughnessy's contacts with prospects.

The wife of the Consul to Timbuctoo dressed for dinner in her silver-sequin gown . . . but it was all wasted on the desert air . . . no one there to admire her beauty . . . no dances to grace . . . just a thousand natives and one loving husband. She was all dressed up—and no place to go.

But your products will go places, and be *seen*, and be *eaten*. Dressed in Equitable's glamorous Glassine bags, they will sparkle appetizingly—and stay that way.

Remember the three sisters—Faith, Hope, and Charity?

Faith and Hope went off to the big city to dig gold, and they came back wearing rings on their fingers and silver fox furs on their shoulders. But when little Charity met them at the station, *she* had a sable coat, three strings of pearls, six diamond bracelets, and money in the bank. For Charity began at home!

That's a pretty good place to begin, if you want to make yourself a little present in savings. Right at home—on the things you buy and use every day.

Just suppose . . .

. . . as you are sitting at your desk now I came in to ask you for a position. And suppose I needed a shave, and my suit wasn't pressed, and my shoes were muddy—what chance would I have? I might be a world-beater, but I surely wouldn't *look* it.

First impressions are hard to change. They're often wrong but they last a long, long time.

What sort of first impression does your catalog make?



Today, Miss Susie Jones read one of your ads. And she liked it. She thought the pictures were swell. The copy moved her, and she honestly wanted to buy your product.

But Susie couldn't buy. Susie is in the State Reform School.

Of course, there aren't many Susies. But she, as an individual, represents waste advertising circulation—which brings me to my little sales talk. We have an advertising medium which has NO waste circulation.

“Jim,” I asked an old friend, just back from Europe, “what impressed you most during your months on the other side?”

“Dirt!”

America is unbelievably clean in comparison. Cleanliness is the outstanding characteristic of Americans.

You know the truth of what Jim said. Entire industries have been built on this typically American trait. They thrive by catering to this insistent demand for cleanliness.

And that's why we're telling you about Equitable apron bags.

She walked out of the store . . .

. . . and continued shopping along the street. She stopped to look at the window displays. After going into several stores, she took a trolley car home.

Who was she? And what more about her? I don't know her name, but she bought several bottles of beverage at one of the stores. They were put in a handsomely printed bag—and she carried this bag as she continued on her shopping tour.

How many people saw that bag, and . . .

My grandfather had a wooden Indian in front of his store, and sold crackers from the barrel.

But the age of hitching posts, handle-bar mustaches, and loose uncovered food is past. Today, things must be sanitary—and especially in your business. You must attractively package your food products today to keep up with competition.

Equitable has done some smart bag-thinking for you. We have created . . .

“The Little Toy Dog Is Covered with Dust.”

Those are pretty sad words from a poem written long ago by Eugene Field. And they're mighty sad words when written today about a “little toy dog” or any other toy which had to stand the gaff of display—*unprotected*.



For shop-worn toys do not sell.

But toys that are covered, not with dust, but with Equitable Glassine Bags have that added glamour which means SALES APPEAL.

All of the above Stars were used in letters to sell paper bags. Which conformed best to the requirements of being interesting, in good taste, and appropriate to the general purpose? Unless you take time to form opinions, and can justify them, the examples cited here and elsewhere are of no great value to you.

*Other story beginnings.* Because of their universal appeal, if they are interesting and to the point, Stars of the story-type seem to outnumber all the others, especially for sales letters. Here are a few more—good, bad, and indifferent—for your consideration. Some are too long, and rob the Chain of space, and some lack the dignity you expect in a business letter, but on the whole they are representative of the modern trend.

An Oklahoma editor published two pictures. One showed a dilapidated house, the other an eroded field. He asked his readers to participate in a "You Write the Story" contest. The prize-winning letter came from an Indian, and it's a honey!

"Both pictures show white man crazy. Make big tepee. Plow hill. Water wash; wind blow soil. Grass gone, land gone, door gone, window gone; whole place gone to devil. Buck gone. Squaw too. No chuckaway, no pig, no corn, no cow, no hay, no pony.

"Indian no plow land. Keep grass. Buffalo eat. Indian eat buffalo. Hide make tepee, make moccasin. Indian no make terrace, no build dam, no give damn. All time eat. No hunt job, no hitch-hike, no ask relief. No shoot pig. Great Spirit make grass. Indian no waste anything. Indian no work. White man heap loco."

A colored gentleman, fishin' in a river down in Mississippi, pulled in his line and was surprised to find a minnow on the hook. Disappointed, he tugged a bottle of white mule from his pocket, took a pull, and then poured some on the tiny fish.

Almost instantly, it flopped overboard, and his line went taut. After a fifteen minute battle, he got it back in the boat again, and would you believe it, that minnow had a five-pound bass by the throat.

Two frogs found themselves in a can of cream being shipped to the city. Both struggled to get out. One gave up, but the other kept on agitating in the hope he would find some means of escape.



The end of the journey found one frog dead at the bottom of the can, the other sitting alive on a raft of butter.

The other day I saw a boy twist a piece of rope around one hand and snap it with the other. You often have seen the same thing. For the fun of it, I had the rope tested and found it had a breaking strength of five hundred pounds—yet the boy snapped it in two with his bare hands.

It set me thinking. The boy made the rope fight itself and *kill* itself.

When farmer Perkins went out to do the chores one morning he discovered an elephant in his barnyard—it had escaped from a traveling circus. “Nope, you can’t fool me,” said Si. “There aint no sech animal.”

He was going on his past experience. He had never seen an elephant before. And some dealers are that way about the lamps they sell.

Some years ago, my family and I were staying in a little summer hotel in Wisconsin, operated by a German lady who had lived in Germany during and after the first World War.

One morning, she was wearing an old-fashioned shirt-waist, and I joked her about it. “Let me tell you the story of this waist,” she said.

During the war her father died, leaving her an apartment building in Berlin. She decided to sell, and was paid five hundred thousand marks.

Then came inflation—as we all remember. During that period, the little old lady bought the shirt-waist. The price was five hundred thousand marks—one apartment building.

We all had trout for breakfast except Brick Mueller. He started eating hot biscuits and syrup, and nearly killed himself because he couldn’t get them to come out even. Every time he’d pour more syrup, he’d run out of biscuits. The next time he’d end up with half a biscuit, and have to pour more syrup.

Maybe it’s the difficulty of making things come out even that has kept you from paying this account.

Although there is little to be said for the “dignity of business,” as contemplated by stiff-shirted old gentlemen who use Whiskers in their letters and who consider a smile in them very much out of place, yet discretion and good taste must still be used in the selection of a story. For example, you cannot commend the tone of a letter which began as follows: “As the little brown hen remarked



to friend rooster, 'Seems like the worms aren't lying around any more, Old Cock, so we gotta scratch, that's all'—and forthwith, she began to throw dirt."

There is a wide gap between that which is really funny, and that which only attempts to be. Be sure that you know the difference. If you are not *sure* about the use of a story, remember—"When in doubt, *don't*."

*The big question—"Does it FIT?"* As you have already noted, it is folly to drag a story into a letter, merely in the hope of getting attention when you know it has little or no connection with the subject matter. The big question is—*does it fit?* For example, when Vic Knight was promoting the use of classified advertising for a western newspaper, he sent the following letter to prospects. Not only is the opening story amusing, but it also seems to fit nicely with Mr. Knight's assertion that he does not intend to exaggerate what the ads will do.

Dear Mr. Doe:

They tell the story of an Alaskan sourdough miner who struck a mountain of pay dirt, and came to Seattle to make a splurge.

He walked into a cafe and ordered \$25 worth of bacon and eggs, and three cups of coffee.

The waiter was something of a hand at "putting on the dog" himself, so he turned up his nose, and said, "You'll have to order more than that. We don't serve *half* portions."

This just illustrates the point that no matter how strong a fellow goes, there's always someone who is ready to go him one better. So, if I said the Review-Chronicle classified ads were the best poultry medium on earth, somebody else would say they had a better way to advertise chicks, hatching eggs, or breeding stock.

No, TALK doesn't prove anything. But the fact that the most successful poultrymen use Review-Chronicle classified ads year after year, and are coming in stronger this year than for several seasons, must mean they look for better business.

How about you?

If you are looking for more orders, the Review-Chronicle classified ads will help you find them, and they don't do any half-way job either. They bring home the bacon, and help you sell hatched eggs for \$1.00 and up a dozen, instead of at the regular market prices.

We don't serve *half* portions in results here. And if that seems like just talk, make us prove it. Try a few classified ads in the Review-Chronicle, and find out what they CAN and WILL do for you.

Yours very truly,



When a story really "fits" in a letter-drama, it doesn't appear in the first act, and then never again. Instead, as the letter progresses, you will find the point of the story reappearing, as it does in the last paragraph of the Review-Chronicle mailing.

Okay! What about this letter, used to sell old cars? Is the Star a good one? Does it "fit" what follows?

Dear Mr. Baxter:

The used car problem you hear so much about reminds me of the man 35 years old who married a child 5 years old. He was then seven times as old as his wife. Five years later he was 40 and she was 10—he was four times as old. Twenty years more, and he was 60, and she was 30—he was then only twice as old.

The question is, "How long would they have to live together to be the same age?"

Used car sales have been coming closer to new car sales right along. Already, they amount to more in number of cars sold, and it's not impossible that this year they will be almost the same in dollars and cents.

We've simply got to get rid of 100 used cars this month. If you'll help us solve our used car problem by buying any car in our stock, we'll give you a free auto license, and 50 gallons of gas.

You can drive any car you select for five days before the deal is closed.

Why not look them over today?

Sincerely yours,

Did the story capture your attention? Probably, yes. Is it in keeping with good taste? You are not sure about that, are you? The reason is the absurdity of a middle-aged man marrying a girl of five. The thought is repugnant, if only imaginary. Does the story fit? Is there a logical connection between point of story and point of the attempted sale? No, very little.

All right! Now examine the letter on the next page. It also starts with a story of the humorous type. Is this story acceptable? Is there continuity between it and what follows? These are some of the questions you must ask yourself when judging the effectiveness of a letter-introduction. It's better to form your own opinions than always to be told. Put this letter through the wringer. How does it come out?

*When the lead-horse does most of the work.* There is always the danger in using a story for the Star that the writer will become so



*Maybe You'll Smile, Chuckle or Even Laugh*

Dear Mr. Frailley:

You may have known the salesman who met a fellow caller and said that he had just called at a house where a nudist party was in session.

"I knocked at the door and out came the nudist butler."

"How did you know it was the butler?" asked his friend.

"Well", was the reply, "I knew it wasn't the maid."

That same sort of an attitude is often times an excellent way to judge a good Direct Mail Piece.

It isn't what you say but what you don't say that many times makes an impression in a sales letter. By that we don't mean the omission of any facts or truths.

Instead we were assuming the "You" viewpoint of the customer. Good salesmanship, whether written or oral, simply means the creation of a desire on the part of your customer to want more the article you have to sell than the money it takes to buy that article.

The customer wants to know how your product can be advantageous to him. How will it benefit him? Not how capable you are to produce it or how long you have been in business.

We taken it for granted that you do business on an ethical basis and are set-up to meet his needs. Past history is not his concern... what can you do for him today and in the future?

An especially created Direct Mail Campaign can tell your story simply and effectively. It will do so, at less cost, than any other personalized method.

If you have a sales problem, large or small, in which we can be of assistance why not call us? We'll be happy to offer suggestions. No obligation, of course. Just phone Times 1112. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



engrossed in the telling that insufficient time is devoted to the subject matter which should pull most of the load. Then the letter becomes dwarf-like with a huge head and very short legs.

Here is a letter in which the Star pulls most of the load. It was submitted as a class assignment by a Northwestern University student and is probably imaginary. You might be smiling after reading this letter, but the big question is would it *sell* soap? That you may doubt.



Dear Mr. Doe:

If you like short, short stories—glance over this one which we clipped from one of our local newspapers some time ago (reading time 48 seconds).

Sweetheart, Ky.: Donald Bows, 12 years old, loafed around the school grounds, and the principal did not beckon him to come in. A neighbor saw him, and asked, "Sonny, don't you go to school?" "Yes, ma'am," he replied shyly. "Well, why aren't you in there now?" she demanded to know. "I skun me a polecat," he grinned.

Always on our toes, we wrote to the principal, and in a joking sort of way, suggested that perhaps a bit of "Wissell's Soap" might take care of some of these Huckleberry Finns. To our surprise, we received a wire to rush along a barrel of "polecat" soap. Swallowing our pride, we got the order off on the day received. Believe it or not, just last week we received a duplicate order by mail. Evidently, our soap deodorizes as well as cleans.

While we have never claimed to be deodorant experts, we do know soap. So if you have any small boys to scour, any floors and walls to clean, any automobiles to wash, maybe a canary to bathe, just write, wire, or phone—or better still,

*Wissell* for Soap.

Yours soapfully,

Yes, stories are good ammunition for the letter-writer. They *do* get attention. But when you use one, be sure it is *worth* the telling—that the point *does* fit the message you are trying to put across.

*The power of famous names.* It is no doubt true that most human beings are hero-worshippers. Thus the name of a great statesman, of a beloved author, or of any famous personage in history, may help to win reader-attention for a business letter. And here's how!

*Mark Twain* at one time was a newspaper editor. One day a subscriber wrote that he had found a spider in the folds of his paper. He wanted to know if this was good or bad luck. Twain replied:

"Finding a spider in your paper was neither good luck nor bad luck for you. The spider was merely looking over our paper to see which merchant is not advertising, so that he can go to that store, spin a web across the door, and live a life of undisturbed peace afterward."

So it is today in . . .



The late William *Rockefeller* used to tell a story that illustrates the financial genius of his brother, *John*.

"When John was a little fellow," he relates, "an Indian doctor visited our town with a cure-all. To get trade started, the doctor, took out a bright silver dollar, and said he would auction it off.

"How much am I bid," he said, "for this bright silver dollar?"

"But the crowd was cautious, silent, suspicious. No bids were made.

"How much am I bid," shouted the Indian doctor, "Come, come, gents! A nickel? A dime?"

"I bid a nickel," piped up the youthful John D. at last.

"The dollar is yours, boy," said the doctor. "Hand up your nickel."

"Take it out of the dollar," chirped little John D., "and gimme 95 cents change."

This story illustrates the situation today in . . .

*Columbus* never did know where he was going, and when he got back home, he didn't know where he had been. You'll remember, too, he made the trip on borrowed money.

Many men in business today don't seem to know . . .

"Allure" is the same today as it was when *Cleopatra*, the IT girl of Egypt, kept the Nile boys in a romantic dither. Daintiness is still the stock-in-trade of the eternal feminine.

And daintiness should be . . .

*Horace Greeley*, who always insisted that the word "News" was plural, exchanged the following messages with one of his reporters.

Dear L.A.: Are there any news? Horace Greeley.

Dear Mr. Greeley: Not a new. L. A.

Effective Personal Letters, by . . .

*Robert Bruce*, hiding in a cave, watched a spider spinning and climbing a web. Time after time the web broke, but always the spider began spinning and climbing again, until at last he reached his goal.

Watching this determined fellow, Bruce got renewed courage, emerged from his hiding place, and started his successful "come-back" to the throne of Scotland. Perhaps he or one of his followers coined the old maxim: "If at first you don't succeed—try, try again."

I don't want to pester you about . . .



There's a big difference between confidence and conceit. When *Babe Ruth*, in that World's Series game, laughed at the crowd, and pointed to the exact place where he would hit the ball into the bleachers, maybe that was conceit in your book, but not in mine.

You see, Babe hit the ball just where he had said he would—for a home-run.

A lot of folks I know could stand . . .

Names have great power in proportion, of course, to how well they are known, and the particular individual's attention to them. It is hardly possible to think of *any* name that will win a favorable reception from *everybody*. Impossible as it may seem, there are probably some people who know nothing of Babe Ruth, and as time passes there will be more of them. In the imagination of many men, Cleopatra still holds her own with the beauties of Hollywood, and long after some of the latter have been forgotten, she will still live on. But to one who has never heard of "Cleo," the name of Sophie Glutz would mean as much.

*Use of an interesting quotation.* Many a business letter gets off to a flying start with a quotation which makes the reader nod his head in agreement, or it may merely amuse him. Unlike stories, the statements of interesting people do not seem to suffer from repetition. The value of a story decreases rapidly with each telling, but this does not seem to be true of a proverb, a poem, or a striking utterance by some speaker or writer. If the quotation is one that the reader knows and *likes*, the use of it establishes a bond of mutual appreciation. Hence, in your scrapbook of possible material for business letters, reserve one section for quotations. You may be surprised how one of them will come to your rescue in a hurried moment.

Insurance agent Rupert L. Mills of Peoria, Illinois, used a Chinese proverb to good advantage in the following letter. Notice that toward the end he repeats the quotation for a better "fit."

Dear Mr. Nutter:

There's an old and bitingly truthful Chinese proverb that says:

"Man who sits with open mouth waits  
long time for roast goose to fly in."

If we want the good things of life for ourselves or those who look to us for support, the only way to obtain those good things is to  
**GET BUSY AND GO AFTER THEM.**

Now, one of the eternally good things in life, but one that few enjoy, is peace of mind. There is no more comforting thought



in the world than this: the complete certainty that when we grow too old to work, we can retire and enjoy a steady monthly income which is depression-proof, promoter-proof, and guaranteed to last as long as we do.

Just ponder that blessing a moment—the knowledge that when you want to quit work and spend your sunset years in leisurely independence, you will be able to do so—**WITHOUT FAIL**. If you could have that positive assurance *now*, wouldn't it remove those aggravating worries that flit through your mind every time you indulge in some financial "splurge" with today's hard-earned dollars? With the **FUTURE** safe, the **PRESENT** is far, far sweeter to enjoy.

But unless you **DO SOMETHING** about those years ahead, you will be very much like the chap who "sits with open mouth waiting for roast goose to fly in." Old-age prosperity must be planned in advance. We cannot put off indefinitely the business of getting started on our program of personal independence. The longer we delay our start, the harder the task will be.

For your own peace of mind, I'm hoping that after reading this letter, you'll decide **TODAY** to do something for your eventual comfort, while there's still time to do it properly and completely. This letterhead tells you how you can get in touch with me, so that I can show you the ideal, guaranteed way to financial security.

Sincerely yours,

This letter has a homespun tone which carries considerable conviction. It seems that one man has placed a friendly hand on the shoulder of another. "Don't wait for the roast goose to fly in," he says. "Come, let me help you while there is still time."

Let's see that scrapbook we were talking about. A real estate salesman wants to write a letter about the joys of home ownership. Is there a quotation in your book that might help him? Yes, there's one—"When you buy a *house* it becomes a *home*." And what about those others?

"HOME—a world of strife shut out, a world of love shut in."

"HOME—the father's kingdom, the mother's world, and the child's paradise."

"HOME—where Heaven touches earth."

"HOME—where we grumble the most and are treated the best."

"HOME—the only place on earth where the faults of humanity are hidden under the sweet mantle of charity."

Quite all right. Any one of those quotations, with the possible exception of the fourth, could be used as the Star in a letter to sell



homes. The sentiment expressed in them is appropriate. It wouldn't do for selling locomotives, cement, or filing cabinets, but people are sentimental about owning their own homes. For this particular purpose, a serious quotation is much better than a humorous one. In fact, for *all* general letter-purposes that is likely to be true.

*Use humorous quotations with caution.* It is much easier to start a letter with something serious, of good attention value, and continue in the same tone, than to first make the reader laugh and then face the problem of bringing him back to the plane of sober contemplation. Besides, the situation becomes hopeless if the reader *doesn't* laugh.

There are all kinds of humor, and what strikes one man as funny may leave another person cold. For example, here's a letter which begins:

You have heard what one big toe said to the other big toe-- don't look now, but I think there's a couple of heels following me.

Is that funny? Well, I doubt if it would provoke much laughter in a meeting of college professors, but as it happened the letter went to salesmen whose bump of humor may not be so sensitive. Perhaps salesmen laugh more easily than professors.

The following are a little more subtle, and for that reason, not counting others, you would no doubt rate them higher.

Mark Twain once said: "When a man goes to buy a collar, he comes back with the collar and maybe a necktie, but when he sends his wife, she comes back with a jar of face-cream, four yards of dress goods, some silk hosiery, and **FORGETS** the collar."

There's an old saying—"It all depends on whose kid has the measles." (Useful in letters where there is a clash in points of view.)

Says Jack Carr: "We know of no sadder case than that of the young man who joined the navy to see the world, and then spent four years in a submarine."

You often hear it said: "Watch your P's and Q's." Well, I've got to watch them. That's my job. You see, I'm a proofreader.

"Always do right. This will gratify some people, and astonish the rest." (M. T.—that man again.)



"They licked their platters clean."

I am a cook—a very good cook. I know this for two reasons. First, my taste tells me. Second, like the people in the fairy story, my customers "lick their platters clean." (From a letter applying for a job in a company cafeteria. She *got it*.)

Here's a letter to salesmen, urging extra effort while the manager is away on vacation. The jingle used as the attention-getter is utter nonsense, but it may be in the right groove for salesmen, who usually resent anything "inspirational" from the home office. Notice, too, that the Star flickers again in the last sentence.

Dear Slim:

Maybe you have heard this jingle before, but here goes:

Said the busy young salesman, "Now why  
Can't I look in my ear with my eye?  
I'm sure I could do it if I set my mind to it,  
For you never can tell 'til you try."

Here's the point: Del Brown is away this month for a little vacation. While he is gone, we are working harder than ever to have the Sales Curve show a big hump for June, just to prove to Del that his helpers CAN keep things going. Every member of this department fully realizes that you and the rest of the salesmen determine whether or not the curve goes down, stays level, or goes up—so I am making this personal appeal to you to help us make June one of our biggest months.

I suppose I could write a paragraph or two of "inspirational stuff," but I know it isn't needed. You know your problems better than I; you know why this prospect and that prospect got away, so you see, there is really nothing for me to say about your methods.

I do think that you will help us, here in the sales department, to make June a big month. No special prizes except bigger commission checks are offered, so all I can ask is—will you please put forth a little extra effort, and send in three or four extra contracts before July 1?

Don't get the impression that we think you are not doing your best. But if you can put on a little more steam, and get a little more business than you would ordinarily, then please send those extra contracts to me personally.

You know, "you never can tell 'til you try!"

Sincerely,

*Touching the "soft spot."* Earlier in this section, we saw how various appeals may be used to influence reader-response. Moreover, we agreed that no two individuals are likely to react in exactly the



same way to the same appeal. Thus, the letter-writer considers each reader as a separate problem, and seeks a point of vulnerability—a soft spot—which might be entirely different if he were writing to someone else.

When the soft spot is known, the logical place to begin talking about it is in the Star, otherwise you may play your ace too late—after the reader has pushed the letter aside. To list all of the special interests to which various individuals may give attention is impossible, but you know the wide range they cover—sports, one of the sciences, collectors' items, any of the arts, dogs, horses, amateur theatricals, gardening, and all the many others. Sometimes the weakness, if it can be called that, may be the love of gin-rummy, or beautiful women, or even the desire to be the best dressed man in the club, but whatever it may be, a reference to it can be the opening wedge for a successful letter. To be sure, this reference must be made in good taste, and not appear as a blatant attempt to curry favor, but when that requirement is met, there can be no wrong in talking to the reader about the one thing in which he is said to be the most interested. And thus many a strong Star is developed.

*Don't expose your hand too soon.* Remember the purpose of the Star—the *one thing* it is supposed to do—to capture favorable *attention*. This is a separate job, quite apart from what must be accomplished later. It is a good Star when the reader is sufficiently interested to continue, but it is not expected so soon in the letter that the reader is in the mood for immediate action. That comes later, when the reasons to *increase* interest have been offered in the Chain. By then, the reader should be ready for action, but seldom before.

With these facts in mind, you can realize the danger of exposing the real purpose of the letter before interest has been deepened, or desire created. Especially is this true when the reader is asked to buy something he had not thought of buying, or to give of his time to a cause in which he has had no previous interest. By letting the cat out of the bag too quickly, the reader is put on guard and becomes much harder to persuade. He knows what you want, and the chances are he will either stop, or continue in a negative mood.

For example, a book house begins a letter in the following very dull and revealing way:

Announcing the Publication of ——'s

#### AN INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC SPEAKING

Here is an eminently practical text which includes quantities of new information *not* contained in any other book.



In the very first sentence, the purpose of the letter is made known. If directed only to a list of people who buy everything published about public speaking, perhaps no harm has been done. But anyone else would know immediately that he is about to be asked to buy a book—and he knows that *before* anything has been said to make him *want* the book. The letter defies the principle of letter carpentry which says that the reader must be led *progressively* from ATTENTION to INTEREST to DESIRE to ACTION, and the steps must not be taken in any other order.

*More cats out of the bag too soon.* Many, many business letters are wasted because they suggest action before the reader is *prepared* for it—they go to the wastebasket for this one reason, although in other respects the proposition may be inviting and the arguments convincing. The letters from which the following Stars were taken are not at all bad when the whole of them is viewed, but the cat came out of the bag too early. In many a case, the reader must have stopped before he read all the fine reasons which might have appealed to him had he only been approached less abruptly.

When you buy the policy I am going to tell you about, your worries about old age are “gone with the wind.”

(Oh, oh—trying to sell insurance! My good friend, Mr. Waste-Paper Basket, here’s something for you.)

May I suggest to you the convenience of a standing order for our country sausage and hickory-smoked bacon?

(Thanks for the suggestion, but no sale. It costs too much to buy food by mail.)

May we send you, at our risk and expense, a get-acquainted shipment of the most distinctive and most delicious food products that ever graced your table?

(“At our risk and expense”—some catch in that. What’s he talking about anyway—“food products” take in a lot of territory. No, my friend, you may *not* send me.)

Study the letter on page 145. Had it been delivered to your office or home, you might have stopped reading after the seven words —“May I send you AT MY EXPENSE.” From the letter-head, and that get-away, you would have immediately known that somebody was about to “put the bee on you” to buy maple syrup. Maybe you don’t care for maple syrup, but the chances are you do. However, you don’t buy just any brand without logical reasons.



*Black Sign*  
**MAPLE SYRUP CO.**  
 ...  
**BARRE, VERMONT**

Get-Acquainted Time, 1939

Dear Friend:

May I send you AT MY EXPENSE --

-- a tempting ON APPROVAL Assortment of my delicious, 100% Pure, Vermont Maple Sweets -- the same delicious kind we feast on here in Vermont! Sealed and certified "Grade A" by the State of Vermont -- just think of the luscious maple flavor that means for you and your folks!

Yes, your mouth waters the moment you get this true-Maple aroma. If you have never tasted anything but the kind you get in stores, there's a real treat awaiting you. You'll smack your lips over the wonderful maple flavor -- you'll beam with delight when you offer them to your friends.

Take my "Grade A" Maple Syrup, for instance. Your first taste will convince you that here is finer, different, more delicious Maple Syrup than any you have ever known. I have to boil down a whole barrel of the choicest new-run Maple sap to produce one gallon of my Maple Syrup for you. That's how pure and true it is!

You'll be delighted when you see my firm, smooth Maple Sugar and taste its tree-fresh flavor. You'll like the way my rich Maple Cream just melts in your mouth -- the way my appetizing Maple Leaf Candy stays sweet n' satisfying -- the way my Get-Acquainted Assortment of these 4 delicious Maple Sweets pleases all your folks. I am going to send this assortment to you -- on approval -- for you and your family to try at my expense.

But, there's just one thing -- I don't want to send it without first getting your permission. You can grant that in a moment. Just fill in the Get-Acquainted insert enclosed. This wonderful Assortment of Maple Products will be sent you at once. Try them, see how delicious they are. Then decide. If my Maple Products have not sold themselves to you a dozen times over, send back the unused portions at my expense. If you keep them, send me only \$3.65 in full payment. That's fair, isn't it? All right --

Fill in your insert and order blank now and mail them promptly. Your shipment will be made the day I receive your order. No need to remind you you're in for a rare old Vermont treat -- I'll be looking to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

*John Shelby*

P.S. Be sure you read about all my Maple Sweets in the enclosed folder. Then you may want to have me send Gift Packages (with your card or a special Gift card enclosed) to your friends and relatives. Include their names and addresses with the selections you make for each on the order blank -- enclose your check -- I'll guarantee to please them or your money back.



**PURPOSE OF THIS SALES LETTER REVEALED TOO SOON**

Perhaps they are presented in the letter, but the question was popped *before* you got to them. It would be a pity if the sale were killed before the Chain had an opportunity to do its job. That's what often happens when the cat jumps out of the bag the moment one begins to read.

There are some good, persuasive points in the letter, *if* you go far enough to reach them.



"100% pure—certified by State of Vermont!"

"You'll smack your lips over the wonderful flavor."

"I have to boil a whole barrel of sap to produce one gallon for you."

"And taste its tree-fresh flavor!"

"Rich Maple Cream just melts in your mouth!"

"Stays sweet n' satisfying!"

"You're in for a rare old Vermont treat."

Although a little flamboyant, the language of this letter does set up pleasant mental images. A profitable percentage of those who got to the Hook might be softened to the point of signing the order blank. That is why it seems a pity that some of the prospects should have been lost after the first seven words. Not only do they give away the purpose of the letter too soon, but they are badly shop-worn. Too many attempts to sell by direct mail begin in the same old way—"May we send you at our expense?"

What would you say is the most interesting fact in the whole letter? If one does stand out above the rest, it might very well be made into a good Star, one that would capture attention without telling too much. "I have to boil down a whole *barrel* of the choicest new-run Maple sap to produce one *gallon* of my Maple Syrup for you." Now there is something to stir the imagination. Why couldn't the Star be: "Can you imagine a maple syrup so pure that it takes a barrel of sap to make one gallon?" Or, if that's too specific, perhaps: "John Bates had some friends over for breakfast the other morning—you should have heard them smack their lips." That might make the reader wonder, "What *made* them smack their lips?" and then read on to find out.

Remember this point about the Star—*don't let the cat out of the bag too soon*. It is a costly mistake often made by letter-writers, but now you know better. Be sure to avoid this trap. Keep the reader guessing. Curiosity breeds interest. Get him *ready* for action before you ask for it.

*How to start routine letters.* Even though the job is simple, as when no reply is expected or no particular problem involved, it is still worth while to start a routine letter in a natural and interesting manner. This tends to be accomplished when the writer forgets any false ideas about the "dignity of business," and just sits down to *talk* to his reader as if they were both in the same room. However, there are a few little tricks of the trade, used by the best letter-carpenters, and you should know them.



*First.* Make the opening sentence short—just as your greeting would be if you met a friend on the street. If the previous correspondence has been pleasant, and you feel that you know the writer in a personal way, you can go so far as to say “Hello, Mr. Gordon” . . . “Good morning, Mr. Gordon” . . . or any other natural thing you might use in speech. Even if the relationship is somewhat formal, or there have been no previous letters, you can still start “free and easy” with such sentences as,

“You are right, Mrs. Jones.”

“Thank you for writing about the bill, Mr. Doe.”

“I am sorry, Mr. Black, that we let you down.”

“Yes, indeed, Mr. Barton, you can have the map.”

“Good news for you, Mr. Sickle!”

“Don’t worry, Mrs. Fisher, we’ll exchange the lamp.”

The trick is to just start talking, as if the letter you are answering had been spoken, and you are now taking your turn in the conversation. This does away with the foolish practice, so often encountered in business letters, of *rehashing* what the other party has said before getting down to the reply. Why say to Mrs. Fisher, “We have received your letter of the 15th, in which you inform us that the lamp recently shipped to you was damaged in transit”? What a lot of nonsense that would be. Mrs. Fisher *knows* that you received her letter, else you could not be answering it. She cares not on what date it was written. She *knows* the lamp was damaged in transit or some place. What she wants you to tell her is that the lamp will be exchanged for a new one.

There is not the slightest reason for a preface in a routine business reply letter, as there is in playing a bit of music, when you might first strike a few chords. Don’t waste any time telling *what* you are going to say, or referring to what the other fellow has already *said*. Just BEGIN.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of March 8th, relative to John Doe’s application for employment, shall now claim my attention.

From my personal knowledge of this young man, I am inclined to believe he will be fully competent if given a job within the limits of his capacity.

A pretty kettle of fish, isn’t it? Why didn’t the politician who wrote the letter omit the first paragraph, and simply say, “From



what I know about John Doe, I think he will make good in your company"? But no, we forget that politicians are not as a rule so straightforward.

*Second.* Personalize the opening sentence of the routine letter by including, when possible, the name of the reader. This is perfectly all right even for the first letter-contact. There is no discourtesy in the use of a person's name—in fact, it is more of a compliment. People rather like to hear their names pronounced, or to see them in print. It makes them feel important, and the use of the name in the opening sentence seems to put the letter on a conversational basis.

With this tip, there must go one caution. Do not *overdo* the practice. In a short letter of two or three paragraphs, one use of the reader's name is sufficient. In a longer letter, of one full page or more, the name might appear two or three times—but not any more. When overdone, the letter sounds flippant and too familiar.

There are times, of course, when the name cannot be used at all. A complaint from a woman who signs herself as Inez Goode, would be one of the exceptions. Is Inez married or single? Not knowing whether to call her "Miss" or "Mrs.," you would have to compromise by using neither.

*Third.* Use a positive and pleasant word or phrase to launch this first sentence. Go as far as you possibly can in *agreeing* with what the reader has said in his letter to you. This is especially important in adjustment letters. Keep the bad news out of the first paragraph. Begin with

Right you are, Mr. Underwood,  
Your letter is appreciated, Miss Garner,  
Yes, Miss Jones, we understand perfectly,  
Thanks a lot, Mr. Wilcox,  
You are very patient, Mrs. Gardner,  
You can count on us, Mrs. Chapman,  
Everything is okay, Mr. Bates,

or any other appropriate statement that may start a reaction of goodwill in the reader's mind. To be sure, if a request is to be refused later on, the opening sentence can hardly be, "You are absolutely right, Doctor Long," but the sting could be lessened with, "You have been so frank and fair in giving us your point of view, Doctor Long, that we are encouraged to put our cards face-up on the table in the same friendly spirit."

Use these three simple devices to personalize the first paragraphs of your own routine letters. You will be surprised and happy to see how they help to smooth the rough spots in human relations,



and give what you write a warmth which may have been lacking.

So much for the more common ways of getting attention at the start of a business letter—the “How” of the Star. Here they are in final review:

1. Reference to a previous contact
2. “Who, What, When, Where, Why”
3. A question
4. An interesting fact
5. A good story
6. Use of a famous name
7. An interesting quotation
8. Touching a “soft spot”
9. Personalization.

There remains one other method—more spectacular—which deserves separate consideration. We will now see what it is.

#### *4. Showmanship to Win Attention*

*The dramatized business letter.* Somebody once said that all the world loves a parade. This is usually true, although there are some who sit unmoved in their offices as the bands march in the street below. However, they are likely to satisfy their thirst for something different by watching every Wednesday night the grotesque grunts and growls of a wrestling match, by proudly wearing the colorful regalia of their lodge, or just by the selection of a particularly outspoken suit or overcoat.

This love for anything out of the groove may simply be the fighting back of the human race against the monotony of everyday existence, but the psychologists know best if that is true. At least, there can be no doubt that the average man likes a “show” and anything out of the ordinary quickly grabs his attention. This fact is well recognized by the “bigwigs” in sales and advertising, and among them there seems to be eternal competition to see who can turn the most somersaults. This is not said in a spirit of criticism, for if one makes his bread and butter by influencing human behavior, he must cater to the whims of his prospects and customers.

Certainly, we know that a dramatized business letter, if the idea is really clever and interesting, may often out-pull one of the more conventional variety. This has been proved many times by actual test and comparison, so that no matter what our personal opinion may be, we cannot afford to overlook or scorn a device which has made many a letter an outstanding producer. Like every other idea or method used in business correspondence, the so-called



"stunt" letter can be very sweet or very sour depending on the quality of the idea and how deftly it is carried out. The letterman who dares the unusual is always under fire. If the idea clicks—great applause! If it doesn't click—great derision! This, it would seem, should be a sobering thought for those who go in for showmanship, but there are still many who run amuck with ideas more stupid than clever, more likely to harm than to help.

But perhaps you are asking—"What is a dramatized letter?" Well, it is one in which an idea or thought is given *special prominence* by some illustrative or mechanical device which would not be used in the ordinary business letter typed in the usual way on the usual company letterhead.

*No relation between cost and effectiveness.* There is no end to the forms the special treatment may take in a dramatized letter. The idea may be quite simple and inexpensive, or it may be very elaborate and costly. Curiously enough, there seems to be no relationship between cost and effectiveness, as you might mail a dozen sales or collection letters, one each month for a year, and discover that the one which cost the least out-pulled all the others. The premium depends on the *originality* of the "stunt" used and on how aptly it fits the main purpose of the letter, *not* on what a big show it may make.

On the next two pages are dramatized letters used by The Rylander Company of Chicago. One is so simple that practically no extra expense was involved. The other gets away from the regular company letterhead, and of course the postage stamp in the man's hand was an extra expense.

Both of these Rylander letters were two-color jobs, although this does not show in the reproduction. The second color was red—always strong in attracting attention. Only the line was red in the first letter; in the second, all parts were red except the typing. Neither could be called elaborate, but both were successful as business-builders.

*Use of "gadget" to illustrate point.* Many of the dramatized letters that you encounter are made more expensive by the addition of some object, usually in miniature, which is supposed to gain extra attention, and usually does. This attention-pull decreases, however, with repetition of the idea. The first time you received a Christmas letter with a miniature Santa Claus attached, it was an interesting experience. But if by now, as with most people, you have had a dozen or more Christmas letters with similar attachments, you are more repelled than thrilled.

Some of these gadgets are so clumsily conceived and so far removed from the point of the letter that they fail the first, and all



**THE Rylander COMPANY- Mail Advertising Service**

19 SOUTH WELLS STREET • CHICAGO • TELEPHONE FRANKLIN 5954

May 13, 1940

Dear Mr. Frailey:

There's no need of a long letter when  
our message is brief. So we'll just skip

down to here and say "The Rylander Company does  
good work, does it promptly, efficiently and  
cheerfully and does appreciate its customers!"

Sincerely,

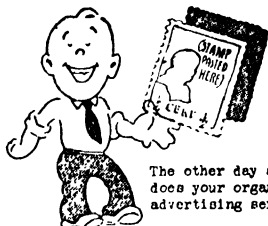


LETTER PROCESSING • DUPLICATING • ADDRESSING • MAILING  
LETTERPRESS AND OFFSET PRINTING • MAILING LISTS • COPY • ART

other times, to make a favorable impression. We can give you a few examples. Although the gadgets cannot be attached to the pages of this Handbook, a description may suffice.

The first is a letter with the caption, "You wouldn't drive a nail with a shovel." Then the first sentence reads, "It's the wrong tool for that kind of work—and efficiency demands the use of the right tool for each job."





WE EVEN LICK THE STAMPS,  
Mr. Frailey

The other day a close friend of ours asked, "Say, just what does your organization do? You say your business is 'mail advertising service': Just what does that mean?"

"That", we answered, "is a rather difficult question. So many steps are involved in the handling of direct mail, and our service is so closely tailored to the needs of each individual customer that there is almost no limit to the things we do.

"When a firm like yours, for example, needs help in developing more business by mail - that's when we step into the picture.

"Often we supply names and addresses of likely prospects - suggest ideas for letters or mailing pieces, compose the copy - and draft layouts for presenting the sales story. We produced the finished material by any one of several processes...multigraph, mimeograph, planograph or letter press.

"We serve many customers on a strictly mechanical production basis. Mimeographing is a big department with us, and our modern equipment helps us do unusually fine work, at a minimum of time and cost. We produce form letters that look like typing. We do typing of all kinds and handle mailings, small and large, with economy and dispatch.

"We even lick the stamps!

"When you give us an order, you use the particular part of our highly skilled organization and modern machinery that your job requires. And you pay only for the time spent on your job. That makes for economy and efficiency and workmanship of high quality."

That is the information we gave our friend...and we're passing it on to you with the thought that you may not have known of the many services we render.

I hope you will find many ways in which we can serve you throughout the coming months. Call us. Our number is Franklin 5954.

Sincerely yours,

THE RYLANDER COMPANY  
*Ray S. Rylander*

RCR:FT

SERVICE  
YOU  
WILL LIKE

THE RYLANDER COMPANY  
19 SOUTH WELLS ST. • CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

All Phones  
FRanklin  
5 9 5 4.

There are two attachments stuck to the paper with Scotch tape. How the letter got through the Post Office is a mystery. One of the attachments, as you would guess, is a nail about two inches long. The other is a miniature shovel about four inches long.

The general effect of the idea is preposterous, and after the first sentence there is no more mention of the shovel or nail.

Difficult to mail, clumsy to look at, no punch, no pull—another letter-idea gone wrong!



"Cigars are on us—we've a new addition to our family," begins the second example. Stuck to the letter is a cigar, a match, and a piece of sandpaper. Everything so convenient!

But, oh, *what* a cigar! An anemic-looking, thin slab of tobacco, wrapped in cellophane.

Quite different from the *good* cigar, packed in a strong little box, which came with a similar letter.

A paragraph in the third letter reads: "People aren't buying buggies any more—nor bustles—nor petticoats—nor corsets."

The message in the letter is good. It urges the reader to forget old-time methods, and sell the modern way.

But my, my—what an attachment!

At the top of the page are two rows of punched holes, and woven criss-cross in them is a corset string. The two ends, dangling out, are at least five feet long—the whole string must be about five yards.

It seems to be a form letter, and no doubt a considerable number were mailed. To punch the holes and weave in the corset string would be quite a job. And what would be the effect on the reader who pulled the letter and the long string from the envelope?

Good? That's very doubtful. Corset strings and business somehow don't seem to mix.

*Questions to be answered.* When you feel the impulse to dramatize a letter, and your idea includes an attachment to help catch the fancy of your reader, ask yourself these questions: (1) Will the reader be favorably impressed by what I am going to do, or will he make fun of it? . . . (2) Is the dramatization just for an attention-winner, or does it also give emphasis to the main purpose of my letter? . . . (3) Is the idea original with me, or have I borrowed one with which the reader might already be familiar? . . . (4) Is the idea practical, so that it can easily be prepared at not too great a cost, or is my enthusiasm over-shadowing my good judgment of results logically to be expected? . . . (5) Can it be mailed?

If your dramatized letter-idea can survive those questions, then no doubt it is a good one. Go ahead—use it. It pays to get off the old path now and then, and when you do, you may be pleasantly surprised to find how green is the grass.

You could search far and wide and not find a better dramatized letter than the one used by the owner of The New Secretary, a letter shop in Chicago. And yet all that the idea required for each letter was a few inches of shoestring, clipped to the shop's letterhead.



Dear Mr. Farrell:

"What's ahead?"

Business economists and political seers love the Phrase. It's a signal to start predicting.

What's gone by?

That's our signal. Four years ago when we started life the shoestring you see represented our capital. That, and the firm belief that we had a useful service to offer.

Remembering 1933, it took a dash of courage to go ahead in the face of countless comments by others that it was "downright silly."

It seems a little silly to us now, but looking back at all that's gone by, we're glad we were silly, because we were right.

We were right because we DO have a service to offer that is useful. People tell us so. It's a dependable, reasonable, painstaking service.

Joining the "What's ahead" gang, we can only tell you that this same service will continue. We've still got our original shoestring (the one you're getting is what radio people call a reasonable facsimile) and with its aid, we are going to try hard to serve you better than ever.

Try us and see.

Sincerely yours,

The letter is good, just plain on the sheet, but the sight of the black shoestring, clipped to one side, adds an additional wallop. The idea was extremely simple, as good ideas always tend to be, but the "fit" with the thought of the letter was perfect.

The good letter-carpenter never places so much dependence on a dramatic idea that he neglects the importance of copy. In many of these stunt letters, the body text would stand alone if the showmanship were omitted. It is seldom intended that the dramatization should carry the whole load, or even the larger part of it. Instead it is present to help win reader attention, to induce him to smile or nod his head, and thus make the body of the letter do a better job.

*Importance of the dramatization varies.* Since each letter-problem is distinct from all others, it is impossible to set forth any fixed rules for dramatization, or to consider the importance of showmanship as anything but relative. If the letter answers the questions asked a moment ago, it will quite likely succeed, but the dramatization may vary from being only an attention-getter, consistent with the general purpose, to being the central idea around which



all of the copy revolves. Its importance rated high in the New Secretary letter about the shoestring, but in the following sales message, prepared by Advertising Manager D. M. Sweet for *Successful Farming*, the little bell only illustrates the story.

Dear Mr. Kimball:

Advertising, in one form or another, is a necessity for the life of business, not for just a month or a year—but always.

One day a salesman seeking advertising for a local paper called on the village grocer. He was surprised when the gray-haired proprietor said, "Nothing doing. I've been established fifty years, and I've never advertised."

\*\*\*\*\* "What is that building on the hill?" asked the sales-  
 \* man.  
 Small \*  
 bell \* "The village church," said the grocer.  
 fixed \*  
 here \* "Been there long?" asked the salesman.  
 on \*  
 string \* "About two hundred years."  
 \*  
 \*\*\*\*\* "Well, they still ring the bell!"

You must keep "ringing the bell" at customers' doors year in and year out. And by no means forget that FARMERS represent a vast, moneyed market that can bring you rich returns. . . . But it takes a FARM publication to reach the farm market and it takes SUCCESSFUL FARMING to reach QUALITY farmers. SUCCESSFUL FARMING concentrates more of its circulation in the world's richest farming region—the "Heart"—than does any other farm magazine. That is where farmers are worth TWO for ONE!

Sincerely yours,

You will agree that in Mr. Sweet's letter the miniature bell had a small role to play. But when the curtain went up, the bell did help to get reader attention, and later it added a little reality to the story of the church-bell. Just how much—if at all—the miniature bell contributed to the *pull* of the letter, nobody could say. On Easter morning, Mrs. John Doe will wear a new hat—a very pretty hat. It will undoubtedly get plenty of attention, but how much will it increase Mrs. Doe's popularity? Who could say?

Nevertheless, it must be reasonable to assume that any illustrative idea in keeping with the theme of the letter, and helping to capture that important first-second attention, must be accorded some credit when the votes are counted. The following letter, which starts with a story not too good because of its age, might have been allowed to stand on its own legs, but the writer thought to add a little interest by fastening to the message a thin bag of oat kernels.



Again, the importance of this feature is not great, but it does serve to gain immediate attention when the reader pulls the letter from the envelope.

Dear Mr. McCrea:

. . . and then the horse died!

There was once a farmer, who, in the interest of economy, tried sneaking away his horse's rations one oat at a time. When he took away the last oat, the horse died of malnutrition.

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*        \*  
\* Bag \*  
\* of \*  
\* Oats \*  
\*        \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

During this period of looking forward to better business, it is more evident that a company must be fed sufficient capable employees, or it loses its "pep." For low costs may not be economy if high standards are broken down.

The National placement and replacement service is economy itself—it eliminates all costs in securing capable employees. Economical of your time and temper, too, since we send only those selected men and women who are actually qualified by experience, personality, and character to be in your employ. We make a *business* of that.

Of course, you know the successful applicant pays the charges for our service. But do you know that the fee we ask is the smallest in the city—in many instances less than half that charged elsewhere? We think you will consider this important in these days when one dollar must do the work of two.

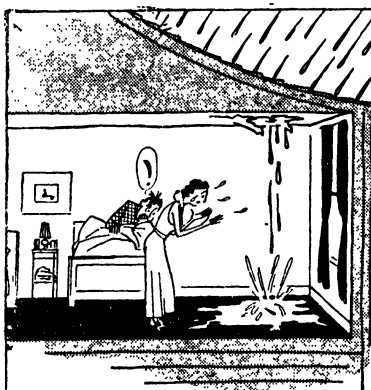
A 'phone call to Kingsley 4444 will cut your cost of employee selection . . . or use the enclosed convenience card; it requires no postage.

Very truly yours,

You see that in both of the preceding letters, the gadgets only *illustrate* something said in the copy. The text, without the bell or the bag of oats, would be just as clearly understood by the readers. Similarly, in the "Latz Letter" prepared for the Chesapeake Roofing Co. (page 157), the picture and the personalizing of the reader's name in large type serve only to *supplement* the copy. Omit the reference to the picture in the last sentence, and the copy is still a complete message. This letter about leaking roofs, by the way, was ingeniously planned for delivery on a rainy day, the idea being that it would be received at a time when the reader and his wife might be having the experience illustrated in the picture.

Consider, also, the letters on pages 158–160. In all of them, the copy tells a complete story, and could be used without the dramatization, but in each case, showmanship adds to the effectiveness of the job.





MR. CRAWFORD  
DID YOUR ROOF LEAK  
LAST NIGHT?

AFTER YESTERDAY'S R-A-I-N....  
MR. CRAWFORD

... did your ROOF LEAK? If it did, or if your roof is not in first-class condition, NOW is the time to have it fixed. Each succeeding storm will only make it worse -- cause you more trouble -- more damage -- more expense.

... don't be like the man who couldn't fix his roof when it was raining and who said he didn't need to fix it when the weather was nice.

... let us look your roof over N-O-W and give you an estimate for putting it in tip-top condition -- make your roof worry-proof, damage-proof, expense-proof, for years to come. We know we can please you -- and your purse!

.... just telephone us now, or mail back the enclosed card TODAY -- no postage necessary. Don't have the experience shown in the picture.

.... yours for a GOOD ROOF,

*A. King, Jr.*  
Chesapeake Roofing Company



P. S. The FHA loan plan makes it easy for you to have that new roof put on right now and pay for it in small, monthly payments. Let us show you samples of beautiful Certain-teed Shingles, "Millerized" for extra years of long life, and explain how simple it will be to have the work done now. Mail the card today.

CHESAPEAKE ROOFING CO.

4730-32 Reisterstown Road  
BALTIMORE, MD.


Phone Liberty 5675 - 5676

"LATE LETTER"

### HELD FOR MAILING AFTER HEAVY RAINS

In the Hart Schaffner & Marx letter, used by Wolff's in St. Louis, nothing is said about the stamps of Peru, Chile, Australia, and the United States, but they help immensely to sharpen the description of how each of those nations contributes to the making of a "Rare-pack" coat. In the second H. S. & M. letter, used by dealer Baskin in Chicago, the story used for the Star would stand alone, but the





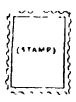


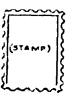

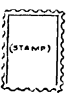
**HART SCHAFFNER & MARX CLOTHES**

Wolff's

7th AND OLIVE ST. LOUIS, MO.

Dear Sir:

Four countries furnish the hair fibers that go into that famed-for-luxury coat -- Rarepack by Hart Schaffner & Marx:

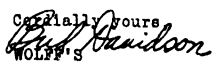
	<p><u>Peru</u> sends fibers from her native alpaca... and these give Rarepack its soft, rich, luxurious feel.</p>	
	<p><u>Chile</u> furnishes prized guanaco yarns... and from these Rarepack gets its luster.</p>	
	<p><u>Australia and America</u> provide deep, thick wool which gives Rarepack log-fire warmth on the coldest days.</p>	
	<p><u>United States</u> supplies mohair from the backs of its Texas goats-and its the mohair that gives Rarepack its durability.</p>	

...and when these four types of fibers get together the result is one of the most amazing coats you've ever had on.

Rarepack is an exclusive fabric - it's not "just another" hair-type coat. It has 25,184 hair fibers to every inch...and because they're packed together so tightly Rarepack will wear and have plenty of stamina left long after most coats of this kind are ready to be discarded.

Rarepack's been designed to take wild weather, mild weather and in-between weather right in stride. And because of Rarepack's scientific construction there's not a wrinkle in rackful of these remarkable coats!

Does Rarepack sound expensive to you? That's where you'll be pleasantly surprised. The price is only \$45.

Cordially yours  
  
 WOLFF'S

horseshoe (a miniature one attached to the page) commands instant attention, and thus helps the effectiveness of the copy.

In a similar way, there is no reason why the drawing of the open eye in the Beauty Shop letter could not have been omitted—except that it does get special attention and makes the first impression all the more interesting.

*Letters where the "stunt" plays first fiddle.* There are many ways



TELEPHONE ANDOVER 1000

**BASKIN**  
TWO STORES

133 S State St

Clark at Washington

CHICAGO ILL

Dear Sir:

"For want of a  
lost....."Remember that  
one horse was minus one  
a battle?

shoe, the horse was

old story? How because  
shoe a whole army lost

It illustrates the importance of seemingly small details. And it's the painstaking attention Hart Schaffner & Marx pays to such details that's made their Triple Test Worsted suit one of the best suits in the country today!

For Triple Test is actually created to stand up under the three tests most important in the minds of the majority of men when they're ready to buy a suit of clothes. The suit must wear... it must be a good value for the money...and it must be styled right.

Triple Test bats 1000% in all three of these leagues... because Triple Test is subjected to scores of rigid tests before it is ever allowed to carry the Triple Test label.

But we're not going to go into a long description about the details that go into the making of this famous suit of ours! They all add up to the sum total of one whole of a good value - in authentic style (always smart, never extreme) in money-saving upkeep (Triple Test has what it takes to hold its shape and press) - in topnotch service (here's a suit that really wears like iron).

We have a number of Triple Test Worsteds in the patterns and colors we're sure you'll like. May we show them to you?

Their price? Only \$35.00!

Cordially yours

BASKIN

THE TRUMPETER LABEL

**HART SCHAFFNER & MARX CLOTHES**

to classify dramatized letters. One is to place them in two groups—letters similar to the above where the dramatization merely increases interest, and those in which it is woven into the copy, so that it could not possibly be omitted. For the second type, we may begin with a clever idea used by the circulation manager of *Life* magazine. The letter is dated March 4, and is typed on the back of the March 7 issue cover. The copy explains itself.





## AN EYE OPENER

That's just what we have for you. Since you last paid us a visit, we have completely remodeled and modernized our beauty salon. It is really something to see!

You'll love our new individual booths, so arranged and equipped that you may be entirely secluded during the washing and drying process. As for equipment, we have added several thousand dollars worth of the latest and most exclusive models. What they won't do --- well, you just couldn't name it --- a new electrolysis machine to remove those hairs you've fussed so about; a new permanent waving machine that you will no longer have to dread, because there is no heat connected with it. In fact, the entire salon is air conditioned.

As for our operators, we've added to our staff Monsieur Couline, who holds first place as a hair stylist. If you aren't entirely satisfied with the way you're wearing your hair, why don't you drop in and let Monsieur Couline try something new with it? In a few minutes, he will be able to design a lovely new coiffure especially suited to your personality --- and to yours alone.

Or our masseuse --- she's one of the best. You'd feel so relaxed and peaceful just lying there and letting her smooth away all your cares and worries --- quiet, soothing, and oh --- so good for you.

And then we have a make-up expert. She can try new shades of powder to suit your complexion and blend the make-up to harmonize with your natural coloring. For two weeks only, this special service will be provided free to all our former patrons.

Come in and see with your own eyes all the many advantages we offer you.

I'm sorry--

Sorry that I can't send you more than the cover of this week's **LIFE** (because your subscription has expired) . . .

Sorry that you are going to miss seeing all the exciting, important news stories pictured in this issue . . .

But let me send you *all* of **LIFE** next week.

I will gladly pay the Air Mail postage on the enclosed renewal card to save your missing another week of **LIFE**.



Sign the card and mail it today—and I will re-enter your subscription without a break.

Cordially,

You can imagine the reaction of the subscriber. Because the “joke’s on him,” he might smile and hasten to sign the card. To be sure, there is also the chance he might be the kind who only enjoys a joke on somebody else, so that the unusual approach would anger rather than please him. The important question is, would that dramatized letter, mailed to a large number of delinquent subscribers, bring more of them back than would a more conventional reminder? Yes, absolutely. It must have done so. However, good as the idea may be, it cannot continue to pull forever. Ideas lose power as they are copied, until eventually they are worthless.

Several years ago a most unusual eye-catcher went from Mandel Brothers to their lady customers. The things talked about are not for business men, but you can guess how many “Oh’s” and “Ah’s” must have been heard among the women.

The gadget used as the theme of the letter is a miniature pair of scissors attached to the page with a narrow strip of Scotch tape. The blades are slightly open, and are supposed to suggest two legs. The comparison is continued by the two round handles, which in a vague way complete the figure. Here’s the letter:

Dear Mrs. Cahill:

Presenting  
the newest

“SCISSORS”  
SILHOUETTE



Inspired by  
Schiaparelli,  
and adapted  
in Formfit  
Foundations

You’ll cut a pretty new figure this spring. Bustline high and separated . . . waist nipped to a shadow . . . skirts wide and flaring! You’ll find your silhouette will look for all the world like a “scissors.”

To help you achieve this “scissors” silhouette, Schiaparelli has conceived a new laced-in waist for Formfit foundations . . . that holds your breasts high and separated . . . then laces down the front to take inches off your waist . . . and with utmost possible comfort.

This Formfit foundation is priced at just \$10 and is but one of the many we are featuring during Formfit Week. New Formfit styles for every type figure are being modeled in our Corset Salon this week, February 20 to 25, and we want you to come and see them.



Our corset experts will be happy to show you just how these new foundations will flatter your figure.

Cordially yours,

Enclosing a stamp to increase the chance of a reply is one of the oldest devices, still going strong, in the letter-world. That the pull is strengthened, no one can doubt. It doesn't seem honest to keep a stamp, so most people feel an obligation to do something with it. The following letter, signed by **TIME** Credit Manager Charles Mason, dramatizes the use of the stamp and makes it play the leading role.

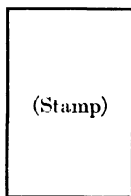
Dear New Subscriber:

"Jones of Binghamton—he pays the freight." \*

Thus, some fifty years ago, proclaimed Jones' Scale Works at Binghamton, New York, to its prospective customers.

We know you want to pay the enclosed bill promptly—that you like to keep small bills off your desk and out of your morning's mail.

So here is the freight—prepaid—in anticipation of your willingness to mail your remittance today.



With thanks for your promptness and for your interest in **TIME**.

Cordially,

\* This slogan did not originate with one of the great mail order houses as is popularly believed.

Even a couple of aspirin tablets can be made the heroes of a sales letter. The brand used is Bayer's—one of the widely advertised brands. The tablets are enclosed in a neatly imprinted, transparent envelope which seems to have been furnished by the Bayer Company. Because of their prestige and utility value they could not fail to arouse favorable and quick attention. The letter was sent to credit managers by The Credit Clearing House Adjustment Corporation.



Dear Mr. Doe:

'Tis widely advertised that should you be smitten with a headache, aspirins will relieve it. Two are enclosed.

But should that headache be the result of trouble with collections, then I unreservedly recommend our service—especially if you want to clear any old claims, hanging over from previous years.

For best results on “headache accounts,” I prescribe the following treatment: At the very first symptom of an account turning sour, **GET IN TOUCH WITH US**—our remedy consists of mail and male persuasion. It's potent!

First, we send an ingenious **PRESTIGE** or **FREE DEMAND LETTER**—it commands respect—and usually collects a substantial number of claims right off. If your account is reluctant, we send a trained expert—an adjuster skilled in winning respect, adroit in selling the idea of honoring obligations, practiced in the art of holding goodwill.

You'll find our Service penetrating the most inaccessible places, liquidating the most complex situations, freeing your frozen accounts.

Yes, for “headaches,” Bayer and Credit Clearing each is pre-eminent in its field. Acid test of Experience proves it. We've never lost a patient.

Have your bookkeeper draw up a list of “Past Dues” for us. If we don't collect, you don't pay. If our **PRESTIGE** or **FREE DEMAND LETTER** collects, you don't pay. If we collect with Personal Service, the fee's moderate.

You've everything to **WIN**—nothing to lose. Just *try* us.

Clinically yours,

The copy in that letter is above average—it shows the hand of a skilled “carpenter.” The aspirin tablets are cleverly used to gain attention and are woven throughout the fabric of thought. The letter should have done a good job.


*Use of showmanship to sample the product.* Among the very best of the dramatized letters used in business are those which manage to sample the company product, or some part of it. As all salesmen know, there is no better way to arouse interest in a prospect than to get the thing being sold *in his hands*. The *feel* of an object creates a sense of possession. This is just plain sales psychology, which can sometimes be applied in a written contact as effectively as in an oral one.

In a sales letter used by the Badger Paper Mills in Wisconsin, attention is called to a sizable little piece of spruce, enclosed in a



glassine bag attached to the top of the page. "The paper on which this letter is written was once a chip like the one above. It is a piece of 100% American Northern Spruce, from which our Ta-Non-Ka Bond is made. The exclusive use of spruce fibre is one reason for Ta-Non-Ka's greater strength, higher white, and . . ."

Thus, the reader has for his inspection, not only a sample of the Bond being sold, but also a piece of the wood from which it is made. This is a simple but interesting demonstration, and certain to help the letter do its job.



COMMERCIAL ILLUSTRATIVE

---

TWO COMPLETELY EQUIPPED STUDIOS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF COMMERCIAL AND DRAMATIZED PHOTOGRAPHS

GENERAL OFFICES  
42 EAST LAKE STREET  
ALL PHONES CENTRAL 1639  
CHICAGO


WE'RE WHISTLING IN THE RAIN --

because --

like the little lady in the picture, we are enjoying a brand new shelter, and with our new improved equipment, the work just "flows" through like a song.

It will be worth while for you to stop when you are in the neighborhood and give us the "once-over"; then you will better understand the "why's" of Stadler service.

Folks marvel at the efficiency and comfort of a modern compact apartment with its disappearing beds, ironing boards, etc. These methods were applied wherever possible when the architect made his plans for our new studios, and the result has been amazing. In other words, we are proud of our achievements.



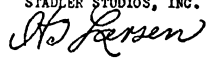
Witness our skilled artists in action, making story-telling illustrations; then take the elevator to the floor above and watch the photographs come through in every conceivable way.

We are telling you all this so you may be assured you are dealing with a photographer who does things the modern way -- and that is just what you will be doing when you "tell it and sell it" with Stadler photographs.

May yours be the next order?

Yours very truly,


STADLER STUDIOS, INC.



TELL - AND SELL IT WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
STADLER STUDIOS, 42 E. Lake St., CHICAGO.  
COMMERCIAL ILLUSTRATIVE



Some companies are more favored than others in their ability to let a letter carry a sample of their craftsmanship. For example, the Stadler Studios, commercial photographers, had no problem in planning the two letters reproduced here. Both display samples. Furthermore, they were able to add a little sex allure which, right or wrong, never seems to fail in winning masculine attention. One chance was taken, however, in using the photo of the little girl whistling in the rain—the reader *could* concentrate on the picture, and forget the letter.



62 E. LAKE ST.  
1322 S WABASH AVE

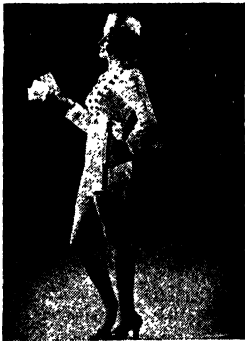
TWO COMPLETELY EQUIPPED STUDIOS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF COMMERCIAL AND DRAMATIZED PHOTOGRAPHS

GENERAL OFFICES  
62 EAST LAKE STREET  
ALL PHONES CENTRAL 1420  
CHICAGO

FOLKS, HERE'S ANOTHER PUZZLE - - -

We have already told you in the preceding letters about our work.

You know what we do - - that our plant, personnel and equipment are at your disposal.



Stadler can solve your photographic problems.

Can you solve this one?

Three men go to a hotel and take one room. They pay the desk clerk \$30.00. for the room, each man paying \$10.00. After the men have gone to their room, the clerk discovers he has made a mistake and should have charged only \$25.00, so he gives the bellhop \$5.00 to return to the three men. The bellhop decides to keep \$2.00 and gives each man back \$1.00. This means that each man has paid \$9.00 or a total for three men of \$27.00. The bellhop kept only \$2.00 which accounts for \$29.00. What happened to the other dollar?

If you can't get it - - write in for the solution.

Yours very truly,

STADLER STUDIOS INC.

H.T.Larsen:vs

TELL IT AND SELL IT WITH STADLER PHOTOGRAPHS

<p>Commercial Photos: Interiors    Exteriors Merchandise    Copies</p>	<p>Illustrative: Still life    Fashion Dramatic illustrations</p>	<p>Reproductions for: Sales portfolios    Photo post cards Gummed photoettes    Mounted displays</p>
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A masterpiece of "sampling." If letters written during the past ten years were rated like Hollywood actors, one of the "Oscars" would surely have been awarded to the oriental rug sales presentation prepared by Norman Focht for importer Joseph M. Eways of Reading, Pennsylvania. In fact, if *any* letter *could* be called perfect, this one would closely approach that distinction.

To this letter are clipped two pieces of yarn—one rust and one blue. As the letter tells you, the rust sample is machine-spun, but



*Joseph M. Eways*

IMPORTER OF ORIENTAL RUGS AND CARPETS

213 North Fifth St. Reading, Pa.

Dear Mr. Jones:

Just two little pieces of yarn -- but what an important story they tell you.

Pull the ends of the rust yarn and notice how the strands separate and fray easily. Now pull the blue yarn and notice the difference -- it will not fray!

The rust yarn was spun by machine. The blue yarn was spun by hand in far off Persia.

Genuine oriental rugs are made only with the hand spun yarn. The wool for this yarn comes from the backs of sheep which graze most of the year in the warm, sunny pastures of the lands across the sea. It is the extra strength of this wool and the skill of the hand weaver which enables the genuine oriental rug to hold its beauty for centuries.

I would like you to see the exceptional oriental rug in my shop which was hand-woven so firmly that there are as many as 400 knots to the square inch, compared to 200 knots in the average oriental rug.

I would like to show you some of the genuine Orientals which have journeyed thousands of miles across oceans and continents to reach my shop from far off lands. I can promise you one of the most pleasant half hours you have ever enjoyed, just "talking rugs" ... telling you some of the truly romantic legends behind these rugs and showing you the magnificent pieces which will add charm, distinction and character to your home.

Of course, you will not be under the slightest obligation. Either stop at the store the next time you are down town or telephone 2-3446 for an evening appointment if you wish.

Sincerely yours,

*Joseph M. Eways*  
Joseph M. Eways

JME:LE



yarn like the blue is spun by hand "in far off Persia." From this simple explanation, the whole letter develops, and at the end the reader emerges with a most interesting conception of the value of oriental rugs. Can't you imagine the reader feeling the two samples, and seeing for himself how much stronger the one is than the other? This is *salesmanship* at its best, and yet the idea back of the dramatization is so simple and inexpensive that it puts to shame some of the other far more elaborate attempts which you see in this Handbook, and in the letters that cross your desk.

Certainly, of the dramatized letters used in this discussion, this one using two pieces of yarn wins the blue ribbon.

Another good job of sampling is that used by Montgomery Ward in a letter sent out by store managers, presumably to customers who had previously purchased fishing equipment. Clipped to the page was a card which carried short pieces of two of the fishing lines sold by the company. Again, we see a very simple idea, although it must have been very interesting to those who got the letter. The copy is good, too.

Hello there, Sportsman:

You have heard fish stories a-plenty—but just absorb this little bit of news I'm CASTING your way, and ten to one you will find fishing a greater pleasure than ever.

Guess I've a REEL yearning for that "Brotherhood of rod and line—and sky and stream that's always fine." Maybe, it is simply that Ol' Spring is in the air.

But honestly, what's more thrilling than to land one of those glistening, nimble trout or scrappy bass? Well, fisherman, you know that high-grade tackle will help do this, and that's why I'm a little bit afraid of my own tackle. Noticed the other day my leaders were all stiff and dried out—a few of my lines beyond repair! Incidentally, how do you like these sample casting and fly lines?

Oh, yes, another thing—our sporting goods salesmen and I have just looked over a new shipment of fishing tackle that we have on display. No kidding, it really looks good to me. Why not drop in some day this week and look it over? And if you don't see what you want in our display, I'll personally see that you get it direct from the manufacturer, at Ward's usual low prices.

DON'T FORGET—the fishing season will be in full swing soon, and you'll be needing new tackle.

MONTGOMERY WARD\*

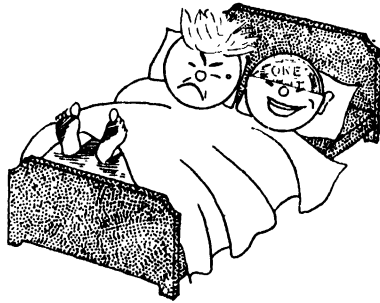
Store Manager

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\*It is interesting to note that Montgomery Ward is one of the many companies that no longer uses the formal complimentary close, such as "Very truly yours." See page 331 for a discussion of this point.



*Story of the strange bedfellows.* Another letter which rates in the superior class, along with the one about the two pieces of yarn, was mailed to owners of income property by a leading Chicago realtor, John C. Bowers. The thought of this letter is dramatized by an amusing illustration. The reproduction of this picture will give you a rough idea of the original. On the head of "Waste" was pasted hair of cotton fibre. The top of "Economy's" head is half of a penny, held in place by Scotch tape on the reverse side. The reader would be sure to laugh at these "Strange Bedfellows."



Dear Mr. Bedford:

While the two sleepers may make you smile, they represent a serious contrast often encountered in the management of the same income property. On the one side is WASTE; on the other, ECONOMY. Strange bedfellows, as you will agree!

Nevertheless, these two fellows may be at work in your own building right now—one seeking to conserve, and the other to destroy, the income which should be yours. The fault is seldom the owner's—he is usually too busy to check the management methods and policies—but day by day the devastation of income is steadily taking place.

Naturally, you are interested in any *extra* income we could develop from your property. That we can put more profit in your pocket at the end of each fiscal year, is no idle dream. Surely, what we have done for other owners, we can also do for you.

In this, there is no black magic. Instead, we bring you more than twenty years of accumulated experience and study, and we know of no other path that leads to true economy. Over many years, the tenant turnover in our buildings has averaged less than ten percent—the rent loss one-half of one percent.

*Other eye-openers in the Frailey collection.* Of course, you realize the impossibility of hanging shark's teeth, corset strings, wedding rings, or four-leaf clovers on the pages of a Handbook. Many dramatized letter-ideas simply defy reproduction in book form.



However, here are a few brief descriptions that may stir your imagination.

"THE POWER OF A SHARK" . . . in big red letters, that is the caption of a letter used by the Wizard Company in St. Louis. Above the title is fixed a *real* shark's tooth. The letter begins,

The power of a shark is in its teeth. Nature keeps them sharp as you will find after examining the tooth attached. With teeth like this, a shark can sever a man's arm with one bite and a twist.

The power of a shoe sale, too, is in the "teeth" that are put in it. The "teeth" are the "plus" that make the sale stick. Take Trimfoot—it's a natural "plus" . . .

"CONSIDER THE 'PEEP,' MR. JONES" . . . so starts a letter mailed by The Men's Shop in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Attached is a yellow cotton baby chick. The letter continues,

Along about this time each year, we see lots of pictures of this little fellow popping out of a cracked shell, and taking his first "peep" at a new world. He's a symbol of Easter, and he seems pretty happy about it.

Same way with a fellow in a smart looking Spring suit—he's a symbol of Easter too, and . . .

"HERE'S A SHAMROCK" . . . is the logical salutation which gets a Saint Patrick's Day message off on the right foot. It was used by Leonard H. Graves as a goodwill contact. The paper is green, and on it, over the typed letter, is the imprint of Mr. Graves' right hand. In one corner is a Shamrock, over which is tied a miniature clay pipe.

The letter isn't long. You may read the whole of it.

Here's a Shamrock, Mr. McNulty,  
and my right hand goes with it.

"Good Luck to You on Saint Patrick's Day in the Morning!"

My son overheard a conversation at school in which the "Luck of the Irish" was mentioned, so when I got home that night he asked: "Daddy, what made the Irish lucky?"

"The luck of the Irish, son," I said, "is due to the fact that they work hard, talk little, and always wear a Shamrock on Saint Patrick's Day."

So today, I'll be wearing a Shamrock and doing everything that a good Irishman is supposed to do on Saint Patrick's Day.

And I hope that you will wear the Shamrock, too, for I have a sneaking feeling that the "Luck of the Irish" is hovering near,



and that the wishes and plans which are uppermost in your mind will become a reality.

Yours for a real  
Saint Patrick's Day,

P. S. Believe it or not, one way to have "Irish Luck" on your mailing pieces and letters is to have our Irish crowd write and produce them.

"A FEATHER IN YOUR CAP, MRS. FOX" . . . that's the beginning for a letter used by Kaufman's, in Reading, Pennsylvania. Attached is a red feather about three inches long. The copy begins:

Perhaps you didn't realize it, but all you owe us on your account is a small balance.

That certainly is a "feather in your cap," as the saying goes. You can feel proud of the way in which you have handled this charge account, and your credit always will be A-1 at Kaufman's.

Because of the sincere effort to meet your payments regularly, I am very happy to extend a special courtesy to you. You can purchase any additional furniture and . . .

"RIVER FISHIN'S BEST" . . . printed in large type, this is the title of a letter used by the magazine, *Down Beat*. The letter-head reveals a plump old fellow, with pipe and rod. A red string (real) runs from the end of the rod to the lower right-hand corner of the page. On the down end, is tied a metal fish. To keep the string in place, both ends are clipped to the sheet. Says the letter:

"According to Old Timer, 'You got more chance of ketchin' somethin' in a river, becus more fish see your bait.'

"Old Timer's philosophy isn't new to music advertising men, who also want to dangle their bait before the greatest number of prospects. They're river fishermen, too.

"Maybe that's why *Down Beat* carried more . . ."

"GETTING DOWN TO BRASS TACKS" . . . begins a letter used by Wurzburg Brothers, in Memphis, Tennessee. At the end of the first line of copy, two holes are punched about an inch apart. In each is inserted a common brass paper fastener, head to the front. About as simple as any showmanship could be—but these old expressions are popular, and the dramatization of this one is quite effective.



Here is how the letter starts.

"GETTING DOWN TO BRASS TACKS" . . . it's your tag business we're after.

"Will you meet us half-way, and let us show you what we can offer on your tag requirements? It won't take . . ."

"HERE'S THE BRIGHT IDEA" . . . starts this letter used by the American Nickeloid Company, and to prove it's no joke, a disc of bright metal is attached—so bright you could almost trim your mustache looking at it.

"HERE'S THE BRIGHT IDEA"—try brilliant metal as it's used on this letter. Always distinctive, always . . .

WHITE ON BLACK . . . that is the color scheme of a letter used by Collier's in asking for renewals. It is signed by David Blair. The paper is black, and the body of the letter is printed with typewriter type in white. The word, "Collier's," and the address, are in red. Apparently, the reader's name is filled in by typewriter with a white ribbon. Because this is an exceptionally good renewal letter, you may read the whole of it. Notice the repetition of the central theme—"dark life" . . . "awfully black" . . . "the dark clouds."

Dear Miss Perone:

This letter will give you a rough idea of how *dark* life would be without Collier's . . .

You'd find that things just wouldn't be the same. You'd be missing its lively stories and thrilling serials, its daring political and social articles, its exclusive news, its breezy yarns about Hollywood and Broadway, its clever caught-in-the-act camera shots, and really funny cartoons. Life can be pretty grand when Collier's makes its exciting weekend visit at your home. But it can be awfully *black* without it.

And so this little reminder that your present Collier's subscription expires in a few weeks. Also, that time is fleeting and there's just enough of it left to renew without missing a single issue.

Just mail the renewal form in the enclosed envelope. The postage is on me and I'll see that the first copy of your new subscription starts on its way in good time. And in filling out your order, don't overlook the savings on a two-year subscription, or the attractive rates on other Crowell magazines ordered with Collier's.



## BUSINESS LETTER CARPENTRY

But regardless of which offer you select, please mail your renewal today. There is just time to make it, if you hurry.

Cordially yours,

P. S. If you have renewed, don't worry; our letters must have crossed in the mail. But if you haven't, push away the *dark* clouds by mailing the enclosed renewal form today.

**CENTRAL NATIONAL BANK  
AND TRUST COMPANY**  
314 FIFTH AVENUE  
DES MOINES, IOWA

LEHMAN BROS. & CO.  
NEW YORK

March 10, 1940

THIS IS NOT A WAR "BLACKOUT"  
MR. FENTON

However, we do want to make it a "blackout" on Old Man Winter. We hope that Spring is just around the corner and with it always comes thoughts of motoring pleasure.

If you are planning the purchase of a new or used car--or if you just want to get some money to fix up the old bus for spring--think first of the Central National "Budget Loan Department". It is especially designed to make automobile financing easier, quicker, more economical for you. Here you know exactly how much you will pay each month. You select your own insurance agent. Best of all, you save money by financing at our regular low bank rate.

Come in and see us before you take delivery of the car. Ask for me or for Mr. Withington or Mr. Hartmann--and mention this letter. You'll be surprised how quickly and easily your loan will be arranged. And our low handling costs and flexible repayment program will surely interest you.

Your transaction will be kept strictly confidential and you will be establishing a highly valuable credit connection which will make funds available to you on short notice at any future date. We'll get your financing plan on a sound secure course to begin with. Then you can devote your entire attention to enjoying your automobile.

Sincerely yours,

*John A. Chamberlain*  
Vice President

LP:cw

P. S. These same facilities are readily available for home modernization loans, loans to pay insurance, doctor bills, taxes, or for any other purpose. Consolidate these obligations and pay them all conveniently in one place--the Central National Bank & Trust Company.

"IOWA'S FRIENDLY BANK"

ESPECIALLY GOOD IDEA DURING WAR PERIOD



White-on-black letters are not a new form of showmanship. No doubt you remember seeing them off and on for many years, but they do have an attention-value which seems to persist in spite of frequent repetition. The trouble with many of them is that the processing is so poorly done that the white does not stand out sharply on the black. Then, because the reader is irritated over the difficulty of deciphering the contents, the cause of the letter is damaged. A white-on-black letter *can* be made as clear and easy to read as the usual kind; a sample is the one used by the Central National Bank and Trust Company in Des Moines, Iowa. (Page

St. Louis, Mo. Oct. 19, 1901

— 100 —

the right as black and white  
where you let the few white boys  
destroy individualism and make us  
people suffer the pain.

As the relationships are changing, the exact message is determined and really for each one is a personal problem.

It takes a duration of weeks forgetting or misunderstanding instructions and the ability to react to actions.

The pros with logs can do a lot for you by avoiding costly mistakes and delays. To make it easy to pick out your best deal, we've selected a trusted online dealer you can rely on.

Chickadee  
Chickadee

1



172.) This one is done with a very soft-finished paper, and probably to get the sharp contrast, the white was printed twice. Evidently, the vice-president of this bank, who signs the letter, is partial to color as an attention-getter, for another mailing used by the same institution is white-on-green. The title is, "THE GRASS IS TURNING GREEN," and money is offered for Spring repairs and improvements around the reader's home.

For good measure, you may also examine the white-on-black technique used by the Tel Autograph Company. (Page 173.) The distinctive handwriting and uncrowded appearance of the page certainly would win favorable attention.

*Showmanship on the typewriter.* Of course, you are familiar with the tricks so often played on the typewriter. Some are quite interesting and effective; others so far-fetched or poorly executed that they repel rather than attract. Neither the good nor the bad ones are popular with the typists whose unfortunate chore it is to turn into reality the conceptions of their superiors. "Here is a Christmas message I worked out last night, Miss Gluts," says the boss, "please see if you can't type it in the form of a Christmas tree." And he never knows how hard and long the girl has worked when she finally places the letter on his desk.

By  
the time  
you receive  
this letter,  
you will have on-  
ly about two or three  
weeks remaining in which

to "tag your turkey". But in the meantime, we are  
sending a dandy big picture of just what he looks like  
now that he is grown up. Those of you who had the pleasure  
of winning one of Colonel Morse's prize birds last year know  
that there never was a turkey that tasted so good. They're nice  
and fat and juicy. In the oven they take on that deep, rich,  
br- own color that makes your mouth water. And of course that  
delicious taste of the bird itself when augmented by the fact that  
you won it in a nation-wide sales contest, makes it just that much  
more wonderful to both you and your family. I wish that I had some  
of the genius of Charles Dickens in his "Christmas Carol" in making  
words say what the heart feels, so that I could bring out in the way  
that he does, the friendly spirit that prompts these Christmas Turkey  
Contests. The interest that we here at headquarters have in watching  
your progress -- how much your attainment of your sales quota means  
to us -- and to you -- how the writer is glad when a chance to help  
you men in the field comes his way -- how the company appreciates  
your work and is genuinely interested in your success and wel-  
fare. This is the spirit that prevails here not only during  
the Yuletide season but all through the year. And it's the  
spirit that you'll enjoy the more, when you receive your  
turkey with the Boss's compliments. Don't forget, how-  
ever that a turkey is not the only thing you have an  
opportunity to win -- remember for each Branch House  
Sales Organization, there is a dandy fine F-M  
Radio as well which will be won by the high  
man. Just a few weeks more now -- and the  
winners will be announced. So get go-  
ing. Don't stop until you have  
your turkey in the coop  
and sa fely  
ta eg ed.



Nevertheless, trick typing has developed some very good business letters. For example, salesmen often grumble over the number of bulletins they are expected to read, and any device that might lift one of them (bulletin not salesman) out of the groove is surely worth the effort. It may have taken considerable time to "carve" a turkey for salesmen of Fairbanks Morse & Co., but it should have gained more attention than the conventional bulletin would.

Trick typing need not always be so formidable. The following letter, used by the Central Manufacturers Mutual Insurance Company, Van Wert, Ohio, took very little extra time to type, but it rates high as an attention-getter. Moreover, the words typed in the unusual way gain extra emphasis for their meaning.

g cost of living p  
n i  
i n  
s a  
i c

Dear Policyholder,

Are you trying to keep the r d down?

Then don't forget that when you insured your property in The Central you R

E  
D  
U  
C  
E

D the cost of your insurance protection considerably, because The Central, as you know, pays dividends to policyholders.

You're also able to gain other important advantages when you insure in The Central. For example, the wide range of available policies makes it possible to obtain combination coverages, eliminate duplicate protection and costs, receive more protection for less money.

Perhaps you have overlooked recent changes in the insurance picture, among them the fact that your home and possessions have become more valuable, would now be much more costly to replace.

That's why it will pay you to review all the facts about Central protection. For your convenience, this information has been condensed into an easily read booklet which shows you how to keep your property insurance more complete, more economical.

Today you need such information more than ever before. So write for your free copy of "Facts about Mutual Fire Insurance" now. Just mail the attached postage-paid card. Your copy will be mailed promptly.

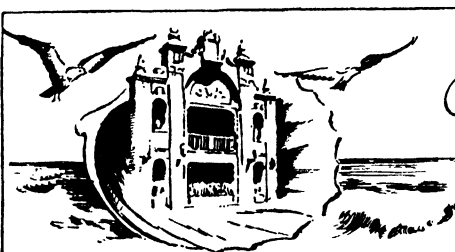
Yours very truly,

P. S. If you have friends who would be interested in lowering the cost of their property insurance, do them a favor. Jot their



names and addresses on the card when you send for your copy of "Facts." We will send them, without obligation, a copy of the same booklet.

The hotel letter is typical of the more complicated effects gained by typewriter manipulation. It is cleverly prepared to capture immediate attention. It does present one problem though, which the letter-carpenter must face when he elects a similar form of show-



*The*  
**SEASIDE**  
ATLANTIC CITY

.....

The W O R L D

.....

seeks CHARM - yet overlooks  
it. There's charm in the  
earnest purpose of a  
little boy building cas-  
tles in the sand...There's  
charm in the graceful curve  
of a sea gull's wing.....  
There's charm in the joyous  
laughter of the Boardwalk  
throng on a clear, blue  
summer day.  
FOR  
YOU  
a  
n  
d  
YOUR FAMILY  
THERE'S CHARM IN  
A SUMMER VACATION AT  
THE SEASIDE where you find  
a blend of the old and new--  
old fashioned hospitality with  
modern vacation attractions....  
'cycling on the Boardwalk, re-  
laxation on the Sun Deck  
.....cool refreshment  
in the Surf 'n Sand  
Room.....and  
delightful dips  
in the Ocean.  
.....  
Why search  
the world  
for charm?  
Come  
down  
to.....THE SEASIDE

*Harrison Cook*  
Harrison Cook  
Resident Manager

INTERESTING EXCEPT FOR GIRL WHO HAD TO TYPE IT



manship—a problem which tends to become more serious as the execution of the idea grows more complicated. The problem is the sacrifice that must be made in space for copy, with the dangerous possibility that the latter may be less interesting to the reader than is the dramatic idea. Furthermore, as the typed lines get farther and farther away from conventional length and position, they become more and more difficult to read. The man who plans the “trick” letter to gain attention for the more serious purpose of his letter, *may* find himself in the lamentable dilemma of winning *all* attention and *no* action.

For the hotel letter, this may not have any significance, since it probably is not intended so much to impel immediate action, as to “prime” the readers for action when the proper time comes. In this sense, unusual typing is like billboard advertising which chiefly aims to make sure that certain products are *remembered* favorably, and to the exclusion of others. For such a purpose, the dramatically typed letter would seem to be perfect.

Remember that anything *different* seems to attract attention; a commonplace request can be given a bit of color simply by typing the letter in an unusual way. The following inquiry to put a mailing list in order should have had more than ordinary pull because of the type format. It was used by Prentice-Hall, Incorporated.

Dear Sir:

We're trying  
To bring our records  
Up-to-date.

So -  
Will you do us a favor  
And slide the card  
Out of the pocket  
At the top of this sheet  
And correct  
Any misspelling of your name -  
Change of address -  
Addition of your zone number -  
Or anything else that makes  
Our present method of addressing you  
Inaccurate.

EVEN IF THE LISTING IS CORRECT,  
We'd appreciate it if you'd  
Check the "OK" box,  
And mail the card.

Thanks  
Ever so much.  
Just drop the card  
In your outgoing mail.  
The postage will be paid  
By us.

Very truly yours,  
Stanley M. Brown

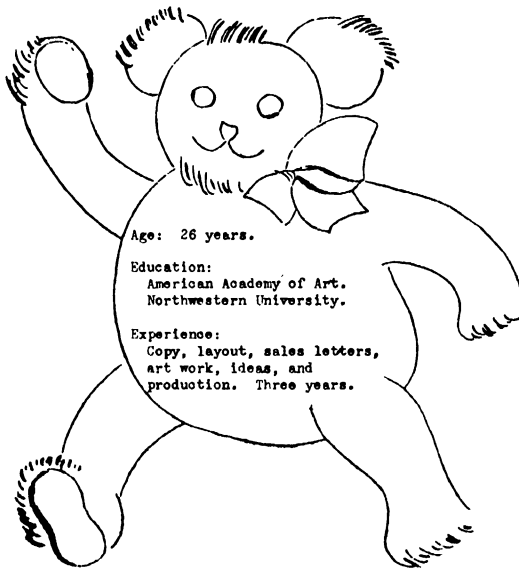
For those who think that copy is “everything,” who always ridicule any form of showmanship as undignified and childish, your commentator has an example which still remains somewhat of a sales letter mystery. A young lady who was contemplating a



career in advertising decided to seek a connection with a good agency. Accordingly, she sent a mimeographed letter asking for an interview to forty-eight advertising executives. As you can see, the copy was trimmed to the bone, and the emphasis placed on the rough sketch of the "copy cub" at large.

Dear Mr. Chittenden:

A "COPY CUB" WITH THE FOLLOWING QUALIFICATIONS IS AT LARGE.



Won't you use the enclosed reply-card to give this ambitious, hard-working, and capable young woman an interview?

(Signature)

It is doubtful that any of our letter experts would have predicted success for that sales attempt. And who could blame them? Except that the sketch may provoke a smile, what is left in the copy to make a big impression on high-powered advertising men? But here's the mystery: thirty-seven of these men took the trouble to reply, eighteen granted the interview, and three offered the girl a job. You couldn't ask for better success than that with an application letter—shooting in the dark at total strangers.

Why did it pull so well? It is *different* from the usual run of



tiresome and stilted requests for employment which flow to the desks of business men throughout the year. You know the kind that start, "Having recently completed the secretarial course at King's Business College, the writer would appreciate an interview relative to a position with your company." Then, as a rule, there follows a blow by blow description of the applicant's education, age, weight, height, church affiliation, disposition, and whatnot—ending with reference to people who, of course, have been carefully chosen as sure to be kind-hearted and complimentary. But this "copy cub" knew better than to bore her readers with facts which could be saved for the interview. Maybe the results are not so mysterious after all. The letter did a fine job, and who are we to discount success?

*Over-sized letters and telegrams.* A very old idea for getting attention is the use of a letter or telegram many times the customary size. These blow-ups are simple to make, and not expensive. The master copy is typed the usual way on the letterhead or telegram blank, then sent to the printers for enlargement by a photographic process, somewhat similar to the enlarging of a camera print. Naturally, the reader is startled to encounter such a giant in the ordinary run of his mail, and tends to be favorably impressed. Here is the copy on a BIG letter used by Eastin 16mm. Pictures Co., of Davenport, Iowa. The size of the mailing sheet was four times that of an 8½ by 11 letterhead.

Dear Exhibitor:

What's the BIG idea?

We thought that 144 page catalog of ours was big enough to get your attention. But so far, neither the catalog nor our letters have brought any response from you.

Therefore, I'm writing you a really BIG letter this time, and it's about a really BIG day for you—the day you start your summer roadshow circuit with those outstanding Eastin Films.

Eastin is the only independent library with Hollywood connections and sufficient resources to bring you **EXCLUSIVELY** more late feature pictures for roadshow uses at roadshow prices, than all the other libraries in the country put together.

Eastin Film alone has developed methods to maintain films in trouble-free running condition at all times. It is only here—week after week—that you get prints that are free from troublesome breaks while showing—that are cleaned, with all surface oil, grit and lint removed by our special process—that have good, long leaders for speed in threading.



Eastin gives you more for your money in every way . . . full insurance . . . topnotch subjects . . . good prints . . . prompt, dependable delivery. Audiences from coast to coast applaud the title, "Eastin Film," as identification of the finest in 16mm. entertainment.

Your BIG opening day will be the beginning of your BIG profit year with films from Eastin. Immediate booking means choice subjects. Don't delay. Shoot your order in today.

Most cordially,

You can see how the BIG letter idea can easily be adapted to a thousand and one uses in business.

"I am afraid that my previous letters about your unpaid bill have been too small to get attention, so now I am writing to you in the BIGGEST way I know how." . . . (Credit Manager)

"Men, this new product calls for BIG enthusiasm on the part of every salesman. It's your BIG opportunity for BIGGER income. Only a BIG letter like this could express how I feel about it." . . . (Sales Manager)

"This is a BIG way to tell you about the BIG campaign which begins next month in all the BIG magazines. It is the BIGGEST STORY ever told to your customers about radio, and it means BIG business for you." . . . (Advertising Manager)

"This is the BIG sale of the year—nothing held back. BIG values, BIG assortments to choose from, BIG savings for you! Everything BIG, except the prices." . . . (Retail Merchant)

"Best wishes to all of you for a BIG New Year. We have made BIG progress, in spite of BIG obstacles, and in that each of you has played a loyal part." . . . (President to employees)

"BIG news deserves a BIG announcement. The date is set for June 1, and a BIG night it is going to be. Nothing will be skimmed or left out—BIG dinner, BIG entertainment, and your BIG chance to meet and hear our National President." . . . (Association Secretary)

Big telegrams, too, are useful in similar ways. Usually, they are not genuine enlargements, as that involves special arrangement with the telegraph company, but are made to resemble the real thing as much as possible. A good example is a message sent by Charles Kell when Western Life Director of Agencies; the layout on yellow paper was telegram-style, but titled differently.



---

Western Life  
TREASURE-GRAM

ST. LOUIS, MO. FEBRUARY 20

MR. BILL BATES,  
2470 ESTES AVE.,  
CHICAGO, ILL.

HERE IS A BIG MESSAGE CONCERNING A BIG OPPORTUNITY. THE MESSAGE IS OURS BUT THE OPPORTUNITY IS YOURS. SIX WEEKS REMAIN IN WHICH YOU CAN WIN POINTS IN THE WESTERN LIFE GREAT TREASURE HUNT SALES CAMPAIGN. YOU HAVE 234 PRIZES FROM WHICH TO CHOOSE—MERCHANDISE EQUALED ONLY IN THE BEST DEPARTMENT STORES. THESE AWARDS ARE YOURS IN ADDITION TO YOUR LIBERAL COMMISSIONS. SET YOUR GOAL FOR A BIG BUSINESS . . . THEN MAKE EVERY DAY COUNT. THE ENTIRE HOME OFFICE STAFF IS PULLING FOR YOU. GOOD LUCK.

CHARLES KELL  
DIRECTOR OF AGENCIES

Telegrams of ordinary size get special attention because they are not received as frequently as letters. Obviously, a **BIG** telegram must have even greater power, especially when, with the co-operation of the company, it is delivered by a uniformed messenger.

*It all sums up to being different.* When you reflect on these sample dramatized mailings, plus others of your own observation, it is evident that they all handle problems common in business correspondence, and that what they *say* is the same as it would have been if done in the conventional way. Dramatic messages are all inspired by the fact that human beings tend to give special attention to anything out of the ordinary. Thus, they do the same job as does an ordinary letter, but they do it in a *different* way.

This is fine, provided the difference is *pleasing* to the reader. In the effort to get out of a rut, we sometimes see the writer wandering too far from the groove, and the reader's reaction is not as intended. For instance, you may have received letters with facsimile checks printed on the upper third of the page, and folded in such a way that through the window envelopes they appear to be



genuine. The first reaction is wonderful. You say, "A check . . . swell . . . now the baby gets a pair of new shoes." But alas, the check turns out to be a swindle. It is *like* the check you *would get* if you were smart enough to own a certain policy and unlucky enough to break your leg before it expired. Perhaps you don't mind this form of deception, but it does lift the reader up and then throw him down. The effectiveness of the idea is doubtful.

Another experience that never seems to please is to receive a letter on which there is postage due. The victim feels that he is expected not only to read the letter but to pay for the privilege. This tribulation was given a new twist by a clever letter-writer in Davenport, Iowa. He sent his mailing out knowing that two cents would be collected at the point of delivery. When the reader opened the letter, he found a card inside on which were mounted two pennies—and the words, "Here are the pennies you just spent to get this message."

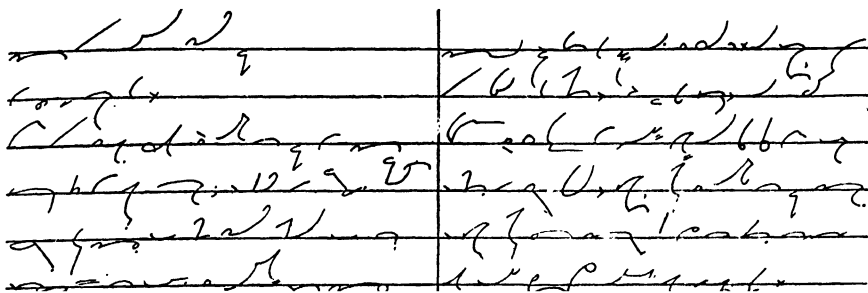
Yes, this was a novel form of showmanship, and we must give its "daddy" credit for originality. No doubt, some of the readers accepted the stunt as a good joke on them, but others probably thought a childish device had been used to get their attention. The latter reaction may also have been strengthened by the fact that there was no connection between the idea and the rest of the letter. The writer knew he was taking a chance with the prank, but went ahead anyway.

Using the same approach of a shock followed by immediate recovery is the letter once mailed to prospects by one of the leading insurance companies. When the reader pulled the letter from its envelope, the first thing he saw was an itemized bill from the "Emergency Hospital." If he knew that such a hospital did not exist, the reaction was not too disturbing. Otherwise, he must have felt a chill running up and down his spine. However, the first lines of the letter ended the panic—"The thought of such a bill, if presented to you, gives an awful jolt, doesn't it? We will take the burden of responsibility. Pay all such bills promptly and completely! A modern shock-absorber at your service!"

But again, what was the reader-reaction? Were those who received the "phoney" bill so impressed with the seriousness of what *could* happen that they wanted to know more about the prevention, or did they resent the trick used to get their attention? The reaction was probably split both ways—only the insurance company could tell us.

*"Just dip it in some water."* Among the doubtful forms of showmanship that may backfire is a letter used by a Chicago printing company. Here is part of it.





After several more paragraphs—the letter filled a page—there appears a postscript, typed in red: “You don’t have to know shorthand nor even call your secretary to find out what this stenographic letter is all about—*just dip it in water.*” Now isn’t that fine and dandy? A business man should take time to walk over to the drinking fountain and wet this letter. Of course, by chemical process the real letter will then be revealed. Can you imagine the business man enjoying such a damp experience? There he stands, with the wet sheet in his hands, and after the letter has been launched, what does he do with it?

*A letter in script.* The passing from quill pen to typewriter was a great step forward in business correspondence, but it did eliminate a personal touch which only script possesses. To offset the coldness of a typewritten message, many letter-writers have the habit of adding a few words in longhand along with their signature. For example, on the bottom of the letter just signed, the credit manager may write “Please” or “Come on, friend Jones, let’s get this thing settled.” The salesmanager, on a letter to a dealer about some prosaic subject, may write, “Don’t forget to bring your clubs on your next trip to the city,” or “This is really a good buy, John.”

The sight of the words in longhand is pleasing to the reader. They make him feel that he has received personal attention—that a cordial relationship has been recognized. It’s a good idea to add a little warmth to the letter, but *not* when the addition in longhand is merely to take care of something forgotten in the dictation. A letter with scribbling all over the margins and at the top and bottom is most unsightly, and contributes nothing except the impression that the writer is both careless and lacking in pride.

Whole letters in script are also quite common. This may be done for a group mailing by using a mimeograph stencil, or better still, with a cut made from a master copy in India ink. The advantage of the latter is that the same person who made the master copy can then fill in the name of each reader and any other line or phrase left blank for that purpose. Here is a good example.



ARTHUR ABRAMS  
TAILOR  
30 E. ADAMS STREET .. CHICAGO, ILLINOIS  
DEARBORN 7948

Feb. 14th, 1941

Dear Mr. Bailey,  
You and I have a mutual friend who thinks we should meet. Yes,  
you guessed who - it's Samy Holmes.  
He likes my ideas, ideals and tailoring ability so well that he wants  
you to know me. And, needless to say, I'd go a long way to meet  
them, justify his confidence.  
Drop in and see me some day soon. I think I can give you  
a few suggestions, without any obligation to you, that will  
repay you for your interest  
It will be a pleasure to know you and I look forward to  
meeting your friendship too.  
Sincerely,

Arthur Abrams

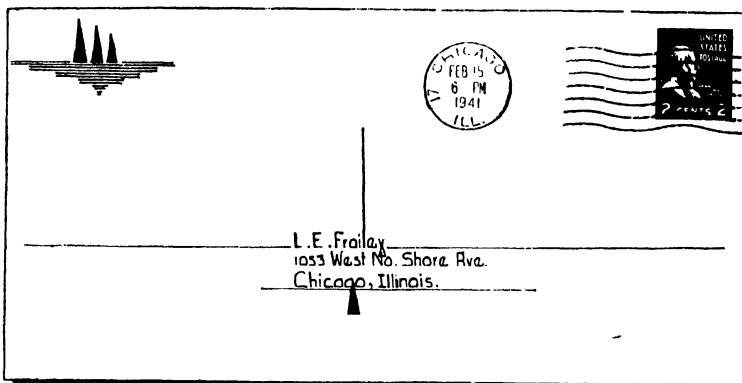
#### LETTERS IN LONGHAND ALWAYS MORE PERSONAL

With this letter on hand in quantities, tailor Abrams was able to send a copy to any prospect recommended by a client. Only two fill-ins were necessary: the name of the prospect after "Dear," and the name of client at the end of the first line. In each case, if the names were carefully added to perfectly match the body of the letter, the effect of a personally written letter was attained. In fact, the "match" in the Abrams letter is so good that even now we



cannot be sure how the job was done. It could have been written out, word for word, although the time involved would indicate otherwise. But what does it matter? The idea is splendidly executed, and it won quick and favorable attention.

However, Mr. Abrams was not content to confine his originality just to the letter. The matching envelope is just as great an attention-getter. This must have been done at the time the letter was mailed, and of course, had to be repeated for each contact with a prospect.



*More examples for good measure.* The forms which showmanship may take in business letters are so numerous and so different that a whole volume of examples would only scratch the surface. You have seen that they may be good or bad, depending upon the originality of the idea, how appropriate it is to the subject matter of the letter, whether or not it is simple enough to be practical from the expense angle—and, most important of all, the final effect it has on the reader.

For good measure, you may conclude your survey of this device used to win attention by examining a few more examples—all of them good enough that we may assume the letters did a fine job for those who used them.

The “Doc” Hanson letter, page 186, reveals a most resourceful idea to get attention, it being taken for granted that any reader would be surprised to find his own picture greeting him when the page was pulled from the envelope. In this case, the picture was only glued at the top, so that it could be lifted and the copy underneath read.

The “Bust a Button” letter, page 187, is typed on a special letterhead prepared by the Dartnell Corporation.\* This firm has sev-

\* The Dartnell Corporation, Ravenswood & Leland Avenues, Chicago, Illinois.



HANSON BUSINESS MACHINES, 500 Buckeye Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio

Exclusive  
RepresentativesVMA in 8498  
Varityper

Mr. L. F. Frailey  
Martell Publications, Inc.  
4660 Ravenswood Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois



Good mornin'! "DOC" Hanson Is Speaking--Mr. Frailey.

I have studied your photo in your *Better Letters Clinic* column, and from my observation you are a congenial chap. Now if I have misjudged my observation, I am in for a good licking, however, I am willing to take the chance.

Before I ask your opinion of the enclosed letter marked #1, I am going to tell you about the letter. This letter has been used by our company for the last twenty-one years with a few changes now and then. During this time we have mailed out thousands of letters. We have received hundreds of favorable comments on it, and only two that were not so favorable. The primary purpose of the letter is to *get results*, and I will say it has answered its purpose.

The letter is mimeographed on plain white stock, the name and address is fictitious, and is the same on all the letters. The letter creates *reader's curiosity*. Have been told many times that the letter was passed around to every body in the office. It is mailed in a plain white envelope to a list of folks who have typewriters.

When the letter was first written, it was given to a Minister for his approval. He marked it *O.K.* You might say the letter is senseless and useless. I am mentioning this as you are classed as a *super letter critic*. Of course, if I were trying to sell you our service, I would not mention this.

Now I am ready for your criticisms on this letter. Let's have it, *friend Frailey*.

The enclosed letter marked #2 is just an ordinary letter we use to procure prospects for the *Varityper composing machine*. The purpose of this letter is to *get appointments*. It has been resultful. What is your criticism on this letter? It is mailed to companies who do photo-offset printing.

In the November number of *American Business and System* there's a caption in your column *Some Letters That Cement Friendlier Relations*. May I add that your *Better Letters Clinic* column helps to cement friendlier relations among its readers? This column alone is worth more than the subscription to *American Business and System*. That's all this time, *friend Frailey*.

Faithfully "at your service anytime"

*Walter "DOC" Hanson* Pres.

V  
Varityper  
VARK

The only composing typing machine with a large selection of interchangeable type.

eral hundred copyrighted letterheads in stock, and since they are printed in large quantities, the cost of using one of them is not prohibitive. On the "Bust a Button" letterhead, a broken button is sewed at the top of the vest.

In the Taylor & Company letter, page 188, the clothing worn by the three railroad owners, is colored with blue and red crayon. The faces and hands are colored in orange. This is also an example of the use of a story for the Star.



On the "See What You Get" letter, page 189, a penny is pasted. This use of coin or currency is not so extravagant as you might think as the extra pull of the idea usually more than offsets the cost. For instance, one mailing is recorded where dollar bills were attached to one thousand letters asking for a donation to a charity, the idea being that the reader should return the dollar with one or more of his own. Of the thousand bills mailed, nine hundred and

# BUST A BUTTON

Benjamin & Roth,  
Decatur, Illinois.



Gentlemen:

Whenever anybody says he is going to "bust a button," I think of my first boss, Daniel Beem. Uncle Dan, as we called him, always seemed to have a button missing on his vest, but he didn't give a hoot. Finally, one of the boys made the mistake of riding the old man about it - and caused an explosion that none of us will soon forget.

"Busted button?" snapped old Uncle Dan. "Sure, I bust 'em. I wish more of you would do the same. 'Boy, tho' they buttons you fellows ever bust are the lower ones over the belt - and that's from overeating. I'd like to see some of you so darned excited over a new idea, or so proud of something you have done for this business, that buttons would start popping all over the place. Bust a button now and then, and I'll know you are good for something more than drawing your salary checks."

I guess Uncle Dan had the right notion at that. With a few more busted buttons, folks would get a lot more done. And when I look at our line of pens, and other writing materials, for sale this coming fall and winter, it wouldn't surprise me if the upper button of my vest flew off any minute.

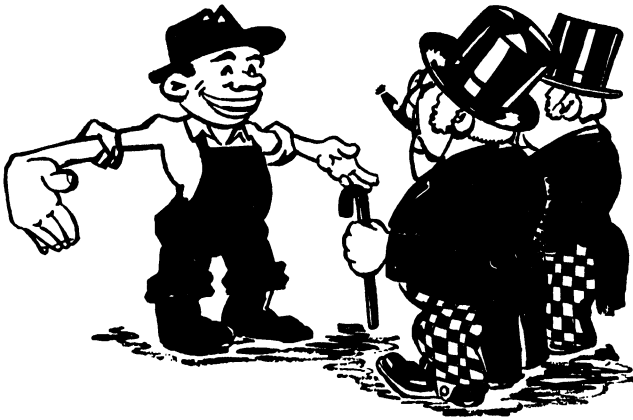
It's by far the best assortment of quick-moving merchandise that we have ever offered, and when our Sales-Serv'ce man, Sam Woods, gets around to your store, you'll bust a few buttons yourself - thinking about the sales you are going to make between now and next Christmas. There's one new gadget on our fountain pens that's miles ahead of anything else on the market, and you can count on a big run on them just as soon as folks start reading the story in our national advertising campaign.

More than that, in spite of advancing prices in raw materials, and the payroll increases we have made in keeping with the times, you'll find the prices right through the line are no higher than last year.

Keep an eye open for Sam. And be ready to bust a button when he opens his sample cases.

Ralph Hicks, President,  
The Hicks Company, Inc.





Dear Mr. Frailey:

At a conference of railroad executives several years ago, the owner of a road some 20 miles long attempted to fraternize with some of the big shots, and discuss mutual problems.

To discourage the attention of such small fry, they frigidly told him, among other things, that their roads covered thousands of miles while his wasn't even long enough to hold their rolling stock.

"Well", he said, "mine may not be as long as yours, but it's the same width."

And so it is with direct mail advertising.

No matter how large your competitor, or how long his mailing list, your letter--when properly done--receives the same attention when it reaches the prospect.

Taylor & Company can prepare and produce for you, letters and mailing pieces that are properly done--that turn prospects into buyers, and that turn inactive accounts into customers. Phone us at Alwater 8850 and let's talk it over.

Yours very truly,

TAYLOR & COMPANY, Inc.

*D. R. Snider*

Taylor & Co., Inc.  
713 W. Burnside St.  
Alwater 8850

### PICTURES ALMOST ALWAYS ADD TO THE STORY

ninety eight came back. This *could indicate* that among a thousand human beings only two are rascals. Be that as it may, this "toss a coin" letter proved quite effective. It was conceived by letter-man Vic Knight.

The last of the lot, page 190, is the least spectacular, but it is surprising how the two-inch strip of red tape gets immediate attention.



## See What You Get



Spokane, Washington

J. C. Tinsley  
Dishman, Washington

Dear Mr. Tinsley:

Drop this coin ten times and it is quite likely that you may get something like seven heads and three tails.

Drop the same coin 100 times and it is almost a certainty that the difference between the number of heads and tails will not be more than ten.

It proves the law of averages that always works for advertisers.

Tell ten people you have a home for sale and it's quite probable that not one of them will be interested.

Tell 100 and it's more likely you'll find a few prospects. As you increase the number you tell, the greater your chance to find buyers.

As the Review-Chronicle Classified Real Estate ads take your sales message to practically every prospect in the field, they make it possible to have the law of averages working for you every day.

Very truly yours,

REVIEW-CHRONICLE

*J. J. Kearney*  
Classified Advertising Director

Dartnell File: L-1 -- SALES LETTERS

(Form 13)

Reference to *red tape* in all fields of human endeavor is so common that the words seem to have an attention-pull.

### 5. The Chain to Build Desire

*Adding fuel to the fire.* You will recall that the Chain of the business letter has the important job of taking the reader from a state of attention to one of increasing interest, so that finally he is





# RCA Victor Distributing Corp.

789 Main Street

Buffalo, N. Y.

You may throw away this "red tape" -

...for you won't need it, buying your radio supplies from us. We're making it easy for you to use our services without the slightest fuss or bother.

Why? Because we want your radio business. We want you to enjoy doing business with us -- to come in and see us often.

We are centrally located - ample parking facilities for your car when downtown - our merchandise is priced right - our discounts are liberal.

Our employees are exceptionally well trained and are specialists in radio. Whether you need an audio transformer for a Radiola X or a \$350.00 tube for a broadcast transmitter, you can depend on our experts to give you prompt, courteous and thoughtful attention.

We have a complete line of:

RCA VICTOR INSTRUMENTS  
RCA PARTS...VICTOR RECORDS...RCA TUBES  
WESTON & HICKOK TEST EQUIPMENT  
RCA PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEMS  
RCA ANTENNA EQUIPMENT  
RCA TEST INSTRUMENTS  
EVEREADY BATTERIES

Use the attached card - or call Washington 0516 - Let us prove our superior service.

Very truly yours,

RCA VICTOR DISTRIBUTING CORP.

Standard and All Wave Receivers - Radio Phonographs - Auto Radios - Farm Radios - Victor and Bluebird Records - Commercial Sound Products - RCA Tubes - RCA Standard and All Wave Antennae - Individual and Component Parts and Accessories - Eveready Batteries - Weston and Hickok Instruments

## A SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE DRAMATIZED MESSAGE

*ready* to act as the writer will suggest in the Hook. Thus, after the spark which starts the fire, the Chain comes along to add fuel—not only to keep the fire burning, but to make it burn more brightly.

The Chain, of course, is the body of the letter, and of necessity is usually much longer than either the Star or the Hook. This is true because it takes time to parade before the reader the facts which he must know if action is to be secured. The length cannot be avoided,



as the reader will not jump directly from mere attention to favorable action, but it does present a serious problem for the letter-carpenter. This problem is the possibility that at some point before all the facts can be marshaled and the whole story told, interest will be broken, and no more of the letter will be read. Hence, the facts in the Chain must be co-ordinated into a *swiftly flowing* message, with never a dull spot or let-up. Nothing is more important to the success of a business letter where action is to be requested than this "FLOW" from fact to fact—keeping the reader's mind on the subject and giving him no chance to think of something else.

HOW can this be done? Well, the answer to that question is a major purpose of this Handbook, and suggestions appear at almost any place that you might stop to read. For example, the letter-carpenter must construct his Chain with words, and so could not do the job unless he understood the language principles explained in Section 2. He must work with a plan (Section 3) or surely the Chain will fall apart. He must also be familiar with letter-mechanics (Section 4), and if able to reflect a pleasing personality (Section 6), his chances of success will be increased. All through the other sections, matters important to the building of the Chain are set forth—some related more to one type of letter than another, but each having some connection with the major objective of making *every* letter do a good job.

Particularly in Section 8, How to Write the Sales Letter, you will find the Chain taken apart, and then put together again—a survey of what can be done to make it strong, and of common mistakes which tend to make it weak. This information might, just as logically, be given in connection with the present analysis of the Star, the Chain, and the Hook, except that many of the points would need a second "airing" in connection with the sales letter, and there is no reason why you should be burdened with the repetition. So that the continuity of the formula will not be overlooked, there follow a few examples of that fast "flow" which is so essential if the purpose of the Chain is to be accomplished.

*The perfect letter carpentry of Bruce Barton.* Study the work of the masters if you wish to improve the style and effectiveness of your own letters. This advice has been offered before in this book, and no doubt will be offered again, for there is no better form of self-education. In this connection, there could hardly be a more helpful letter to study than the one sent by Mr. Barton to twenty-four wealthy men on behalf of Kentucky's Berea College. Granted that Mr. Barton is one of our nation's outstanding writers, it does not seem possible that this letter, which had a "pull" of 100 per cent, could have been the product of sheer genius alone. It seems, in-



stead, that he must have planned the mailing very carefully; the message follows perfectly the steps outlined for letter carpentry.

First, you will notice that the letter starts by touching a soft spot of the average wealthy individual—the many demands for his money made by charitable organizations, and the wish that he could be sure the donations were put to work in the most advantageous manner. Then, Mr. Barton tells his reader that he has found the *one place* where a dollar does the most good—a strong point to win attention. Surely this Star was not accidental, but instead was inspired by a mental image of the men who were going to read the letter and a selection of the appeal which would be sure to touch a mutual interest. In short, before dictation, came *visualization*.

Second, steps taken in the Chain seem to be put together wisely with the idea of warming the interest of the readers and not letting the cat out of the bag too soon. Thus, Barton paints vivid word pictures of the mountaineers who have played such a brave part in American history, and of the bad breaks they have had in life. This is followed by a description of Berea, and the good use to which meager dollars are put. So the interest deepens.

Third, the most appealing word picture of them all is saved to come last in the Chain—how a mountain boy led his cow one hundred miles to Berea, and how for four years he paid his way through the college by selling the milk. Then, and not until then, was Mr. Barton ready to ask for the one thousand dollar check. Had he done so before fanning the flame of interest to a white heat, the cause of the letter probably would have been lost. As it was, the twenty-four men who got the letter *all* came through with the money.

Read, then, an example of letter carpentry at its best—the celebrated Bruce Barton appeal to twenty-four millionaires.

Dear Mr. D——.

For the past three or four years things have been going pretty well with Mrs. Barton and me. We pay our bills, afford such luxuries as having the children's tonsils out, and still have something in the bank at the end of the year. So far as business is concerned, I have felt pretty well content.

But there is another side of me which is unsatisfied and restless. I say to myself: "What good are you anyway? What influences have you set up—aside from your business—that would go on working if you were to shuffle off tomorrow?"

Of course, I chip in to the church, and the Y. M. C. A., and a social settlement; and I've paid back to Amherst whatever it lost on *my* education, and to Wellesley for whatever Mrs. Barton's



four years cost there. And I dribble out a little money right along in response to all sorts of appeals. But there isn't much satisfaction in it. For one thing, it's too diffused; and for another, I'm never very sure in my own mind that the thing I'm giving to is worth a hoorah, and I don't have time to find out.

A couple of years ago I said: "*I'd like to discover the one place in the United States where a dollar does more net good 'han anywhere else.*"

It was a thrilling idea, and I went at it in the same spirit in which my advertising agency conducts a market survey. Without bothering you with a long story, *I believe I have found the place.* This letter of mine is being mailed to twenty-three men beside yourself—twenty-five of us all together. I honestly believe it offers an opportunity to get a maximum amount of satisfaction for a minimum sum.

Let me give you the background.

[Here the Chain begins.]

Among the earliest settlers in this country were some pure blooded English folks who landed in Virginia but—being more hardy and venturesome than the average—pushed on west and settled in the mountains of Kentucky, Tennessee, North and South Carolina. They were stalwart lads and lassies. They fought the first battle against the British and shed the first blood. They won the battle of King's Mountain. Later, under Andy Jackson, they fought and won the only land victory that we managed to pull off in the War of 1812. Although they lived in Southern States, they refused to secede in 1860. They broke off from Virginia and formed the state of West Virginia; they kept Kentucky in the Union; and they sent a million men into the Northern armies.

It is not too much to say that they were the deciding factor in winning the struggle to keep this United States *united*.

They've had a rotten deal from Fate. There are no roads into the mountains; no trains; no ways of making money. So our prosperity has circled all around them and left them pretty much untouched. They are great folks. The girls are as good looking as any in the world. Take one of them out of her two-room log cabin, give her a stylish dress and a permanent wave, and she'd be a hit on Fifth Avenue. Take one of the boys—who maybe never saw a railroad train until he was twenty-one—give him a few years of education and he goes back into the mountains as a teacher, or doctor, or lawyer, or carpenter, and changes the life of a whole town or county.

That gives you an idea of the raw material. Clean, sound timber—no knots, no worm holes; a great contrast to the imported stuff with which our social settlements have to work in New York and other cities.



Now, away back in the Civil War days a little college was started in the Kentucky mountains. It started with faith, hope, and sacrifice; and those three virtues are the only endowment it has ever had. Yet today it has accumulated, by little gifts picked up by passing the hat, a plant that takes care of 3,000 students a year. It's the most wonderful manufacturing proposition you ever heard of. They raise their own food, can it in their own canneries, milk their own cows; make brooms and weave rugs that are sold all over the country; do their own carpentry, painting, horse-shoeing and everything—teaching every boy and girl a trade while he and she are studying. And so efficiently is the job done that

a room rents for 60¢ a week (with heat and lights),

meals are 11¢ (yet all the students gain weight; every student gets a quart of milk a day),

the whole cost to boy or girl for a year's study—room, board, books, etc., is \$146. More than half of this the student earns by work; many earn all.

One boy walked in a hundred miles, leading a cow. He stabled the cow in the village, milked her night and day, peddled the milk, and put himself through college. He is now a Major in the United States Army. His half-brother who owned half the cow is a missionary in Africa. Seventy-five percent of the graduates go back into the mountains, and their touch is on the mountain counties of five states—better homes, better food, better child health, better churches, better schools; no more feuds; lower death rate.

[Now purpose is revealed.]

It costs this college, which is named Berea, \$100 a year per student to carry on. She could, of course, turn away 1,500 students each year and break even on the other 1,500. Or, she could charge \$100 tuition. But then she would be just one more college for the well-to-do. Either plan would be a moral crime. The boys and girls in those one- and two-room cabins deserve a chance. They are the same stuff as Lincoln and Daniel Boone and Henry Clay; they are the best raw material in the United States.

I have agreed to take ten boys and pay the deficit on their education each year—\$1,000. I have agreed to do this if I can get twenty-four men who will each take ten. The president, Dr. William J. Hutchins (Yale 1892) who ought to be giving every minute of his time to running the college, is out passing the hat, and riding the rails from town to town. He can manage to get \$50,000 or \$75,000 a year. I want to lift one quarter of his load by turning in \$25,000.

[Now comes the Hook.]

This is my proposition to you. Let me pick out for you ten boys, who are just as pure blooded Americans as your own sons,



and just as deserving of a chance. Let me send you their names and tell you in confidence—we don't want to hurt their pride—where they come from and what they hope to do with their lives. Let me report to you on their progress three times a year. You write to me—in the enclosed envelope—that, if and when I get my other twenty-three men, you will send President Hutchins your check for \$1,000.

If you will do this I'll promise you the biggest thrill you ever got for a thousand. Most of the activities to which we give our lives stop when we stop. But our families go on. And young life goes on, and matures, and gives birth to other lives. For a thousand dollars a year you can put ten boys or girls back into the mountains who will be a leavening influence in ten towns or counties. And their children and their children's children will bear the imprint of your influence. Honestly, can you think of any other investment that would keep your life working in the world for so long a time after you are gone?

What will you have, ten boys or ten girls?

Cordially yours,

How long should a letter be? The answer, we decided, was "long enough to do the job?" This appeal for Berea *is* long—no doubt about that. But the whole of the story had to be told, and the only problem was not to let the interest lag. And it didn't! Instead, one is carried along as if reading a story in some magazine—no let-down, no dry spots. This letter had to take time to do the job. The results speak for themselves. The letter *flows* fast, and the reader is carried along with it. Orchids to the writer!

*Another fast-moving Chain.* A much shorter letter in which the reader is carried along rapidly once he has passed the introduction, is one used by LaSalle Extension University. Notice that it has a title instead of the usual salutation.

#### "LEGAL KINKS AND TRICKS IN BUSINESS"

On my desk is a booklet that should be yours. May I send it to you?

Other readers have called it the most human collection of real-life narratives about what can "go legally haywire" with perfectly good business situations that was ever put into so little space. My guess is you'll agree after you have read it. And if you do, it will more than justify my entirely selfish motive in offering it—namely, to place one more good-will builder for our Institution and its work where it will be most appreciated.

Here are a few instances of the bill of fare offered. Don't they suggest how rich the booklet is in food for serious business reflection?



- the banker who should have written on his cuff, and didn't
- the outlawed million francs that Baron Rothschild collected
- the clubman who thought he had bought a \$40,000 piece of real estate . . . only he hadn't
- the bank whose birthday mistake cost \$6,000
- the coal company that had to pay \$70 for a window it didn't break
- the jeweler who left his name on another man's check and paid \$2,000 for the privilege
- the refinery that became an abandoned warehouse because a big executive "took something for granted"
- the \$5,000 that Benjamin Franklin's will turned into \$1,631,000 . . . and so on.

Every day your own duties present some aspect of the legal side of business to your attention; and if the subject of Law has ever appealed to you at all, I think you'll get an added "kick" out of this "Legal Kinks" booklet.

If you would like a copy, without obligation, simply have your secretary return the inclosed card.

Cordially yours,

The Chain in this letter carpentered by L. R. Alwood is superb. The facts are fired with machine-gun speed. "The banker who should" . . . bang! "The outlawed million francs" . . . bang! "The clubman who thought" . . . bang! "The bank whose birthday—the coal company that had to pay" . . . bang, bang! "The jeweler who left"—"the refinery that became"—"the \$5,000 that Benjamin Franklin" . . . bang, bang, bang! When a letter *moves so fast*, there is no time for the reader to think of quitting. More than 16 per cent of those on the list replied, asking for the booklet, so beyond any question, the mailing was a big success.

However, there is no harm in wondering if that percentage might not have been higher, had two small changes been made—one in the Star and the other in the Hook. "On my desk is a booklet that should be yours." That is an interesting statement. The reader promptly asks himself, "What *kind* of a booklet?" But the question which follows seems to let the cat out of the bag—"May I send it to you?" So the reader could say, "There's a catch in this letter. He is asking my *permission* to send me the booklet." That *could* cause some people to stop reading, and who knows—perhaps it did.

The other possible error occurs in the Hook. As you will dis-



cover later in this section, "if" is a negative word when used in asking for action. "*IF* you would like a copy" means "perhaps you do, or perhaps you don't." The last sentence, then, would have been stronger had it read— "For *your* copy, simply have your secretary return the inclosed card"—thus implying no doubt that the booklet *would* be wanted.

But why criticize success? Has anything ever been written that might not have been made better?

*A strong Chain forged by Jackson.* Another letter which rates high in letter "flow" is one used by Merrill M. Jackson, of Kansas City, Missouri. It is especially noteworthy for the short sentences, the simple language, the interesting introduction, and the pile-driver speed with which the links in the Chain are put together. Before the latter starts to develop interest, two cards are played to win attention—the mention of the dog, "Snooks," and of the famous book which so many people have read. Also, a small picture of "Snooks" is attached.

Good Morning Folks:

My friend "Snooks" has never read Dale Carnegie's book—but she certainly knows how to make friends and influence people.

She "aint" got a thing but a bark, a cute little wiggle, and a heap of curiosity. She has never met a stranger in her life. She has the idea that if she's friendly she will get along. It's quite an idea—for it makes her life pleasant. It brings her plenty of attention, car rides and a good living.

Your ideas may do as well for you. For a good idea is the most potent thing on earth. An idea built Ford's business. Ideas built Katz and Luzier's. Ideas won the war. Here are a few brand new ideas that are building business today. Money making ideas! Ideas that are making jobs! Ted Ruhling of Independence, Missouri, has a new idea for fish stringers. He's selling loads of them.

George T. Cummings has a new portable vise, weighs less than four pounds. Can be carried in a tool kit, a car or a truck! It is stronger than any wrench. Every one who sees it wants it. The artist who retouched the photo bought four. My foreman bought one. My wife bought one for her brother-in-law, who has a home work-shop. Jobbers are buying them 500 at a clip.

Brunson has a "fishing gadget." Attach it to the end of the line! The instant the fish nibbles "Bingo" the hook is set. Fishermen are buying 'em as fast as Brunson can make them. Jobbers are flooding him with orders.

You may say, "Heck, those are all gadgets—nothing serious." O. K., my friend, Cheek has an improved wheel-barrow. The only real improvement for years! The load is perfectly balanced.



A simple release automatically dumps the load. (Nine million wheel-barrows were sold in 1939. This makes them all obsolete.) So I still say that ideas make business, make jobs, make money.

Maybe a new idea will help sell your deal. A new approach: it could be a premium deal. A cooperative advertising campaign! A house organ! A mail order campaign! Your dealers, agents and distributors will need help. Perhaps your salesmen can't see them all. Direct by mail campaigns will help them.

There are many ways to use mail advertising. Why not find out just how it can help **YOU**? Our business is planning, writing and producing resultful mail campaigns. If you're too busy, we'll do the mailing. In fact, we'll take care of all the details for you—get your mailing list if you wish.

So, my friend, it's a good idea to call HIA6400 and ask for Jackson—or drop the card in the mail.

Yours Merrill-y,

Merrill M. Jackson

P. S. Printing by Jackson is a good idea, too. Have Jackson do yours. Fast automatic presses! Hurry-up service! Lowest prices!

“When you Advertize—Jacksonize”

Yes, there are faults in this letter. It's good that you are catching them. You are becoming a real letter-carpenter when you can. The twice used “my friend” might rub some readers the wrong way. But Mr. Jackson is not trying to curry favor. You would understand that if you knew him. He *feels* friendly. He writes as he talks. His personality is very much revealed in the letter, as you know by now it should be.

The postscript also is questionable. Postscripts usually are. This one tends to take the reader's mind from direct mail to run-of-the-mill printing. Thus it competes with the chief objective of the letter. This is not good sales psychology. Hammer on *one* thing—hammer it home. One big bullet shot from a rifle straight to the mark has much more power than a thousand peewees blown from a shot-gun. We'll concede that point. In this letter at least, the postscript does more harm than good.

But the Chain is a fast-stepper. It leads the reader swiftly from one money-making idea to another. Subconsciously, he begins to visualize what a good idea might do for *him*. Because that mental image is pleasing, he may do as requested—mail the card or telephone. Anyway, he is more in the mood for action at the end of the Chain than at the beginning. The Chain has quickened interest—and that's its job.



Another possible fault is that the introduction about the dog and the book are only remotely related to the message which follows. Thus, the Star gets attention, as it must, but there is no "carry-over" to the Chain; probably "Snooks" was forgotten long before the letter ended.

But these are minor errors in carpentry. The Chain is strong. No doubt the letter brought business back to Jackson.

In later sections, you will hear much about the Chain. At present, we will pause to examine the Hook.

### 6. *The Hook for Action*

*The letter's climax.* The Star gets attention. The Chain develops interest and desire. So at last, with those parts of the job completed, the letter-carpenter reaches the climax of his efforts. It is time for the Hook—that confident, forceful ending which makes the letter a success.

As you know, it would be folly to call any one of the three parts more important than the others. But we can agree on the utter *finality* of the Hook. It is then that the reader says "yes" or "no." No second-shots are allowed. When the letter is signed, and goes to Uncle Sam the die is cast.

The moving finger writes, and having writ  
Moves on. Nor all thy piety nor wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,  
Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.

Thus, thinking only of sequence, you could give the Hook the nod. It is the part of the letter which either carries the ball over for the touchdown, or leaves it short of the goal. You have seen football teams that seemed able to do everything but score. They could march up and down the field at will, but couldn't produce that one final punch. Well, many letters are like that. They start beautifully, sweep rapidly forward, and then stumble at the end. The trouble seems to be one of timidity—lack of confidence. The letter-carpenter works with precision until the time to ask for action—then he loses his nerve.

*When doubt is catching.* The end of the letter is, of course, the very worst place for any lack of confidence as to how the reader is going to react. He stands at the crossroads, still a little undecided on which path to take. Doubt is catching. If the writer implies lack of confidence in his own presentation, why should the reader take the step alone? Consider these closing paragraphs taken from actual business letters.



We *hope* with the above facts in mind you will be favorably impressed with our proposition, and that we will soon receive your order.

*If* you wish to give us a trial order, please be assured it will be appreciated.

Now is the time when our customers are stocking for summer business. We *trust* you will join them, by placing your requirements on the order blank enclosed.

We appreciate your patience in reading this somewhat long letter, but it was necessary that you understand the many advantages of our service. *May* we now have the pleasure of sending our representative to see you?

In each of those flimsy Hooks, a negative word reveals that the writer is not at all sure of the reaction he is going to get. They are the "fatal four" that tend to defeat the purpose of any business letter.

We HOPE you will be favorably impressed.

IF you wish to give us a trial order.

We TRUST you will join them.

MAY we have the pleasure of sending our representative?

There they are, words that hold the reader back at the very moment when he needs a confident push forward—HOPE, IF, TRUST, and MAY. Never "hope" or "trust" for action. KNOW you are going to get it. Never say "if" or "may" because then you are confessing doubt in your own mind, and letting the reader decide what to do. Note the difference in these Hooks.

*Weak* . . . . . "We trust that this price will meet with your favor. Hoping to have the pleasure of shipping you the range soon, we remain, respectfully yours,"

*Strong* . . . . . "To save you time, a duplicate copy of this letter is enclosed. Just initial and return it to us, using the stamped envelope. You can then have the range to enjoy by the end of next week."

*Weak* . . . . . "Considering the quality of our line, we feel our prices are reasonable. If you would like to have our salesman call with samples, please so advise."

*Strong* . . . . . "When you buy our quality, you get more for your dollar than any other way. Tack Cook, a fellow you are going to like, will be around next Monday morning to show you samples, and service your order."



*Weak* . . . . . "We feel you must realize this bill should be paid, as you have had the goods a long time and should appreciate our patience. If you agree this is only fair, we shall hope for a check soon."

*Strong* . . . . . "There comes a time when patience is no longer a virtue, and the lawyers take over. Frankly, we now expect our money, and shall look for a check from you not later than Saturday."

*Weak* . . . . . "If you will O.K. the card, we will gladly send you a copy of the bulletin. Trusting you will do this,"

*Strong* . . . . . "Your copy of this interesting bulletin is waiting for you. Just O.K. and mail the card."

The difference in those Hooks is so apparent that it scarcely needs comment. The weak ones are very timid; they do not encourage *action*. The others are positive and confident; they *tell the reader* what he is expected to do.

Perhaps, you think this is too commanding—that such a positive tone might be resented. That means you are overlooking the psychological background of the Star, the Chain, and the Hook. Remember, at first the reader is cold and casual. The hold on him is quite easily broken. So you "start easy and work up"—seeking only to increase interest until it becomes desire. In the early part of the letter, you wouldn't dare tell the reader what to do. That would be the quickest way to lose him. But as you go from point to point, as the fire blazes higher, a psychological change occurs in the reader's mind. He is now genuinely interested—he has confidence in what you are saying. He is more emotional—less rational. You can throw caution to the wind as you approach the Hook. It's time for "do" or "don't." The cat is out of the bag. The reader knows what you want. *Ask for it*. Not with "if" or "may" or "trust" or "hope," but with every indication that you KNOW the victory has been won.

You can soon convince yourself that the Hook demands a positive tone by examining the best sales letters that cross your desk. You will find without exception that courteously but firmly the reader is *told* what to do. Let's prove it. Here are the closing sentences of twenty-five successful letters chosen at random. Notice how they all ask for action, without limitation or equivocation—and not one "if" or "hope" or "trust" or "may" in the whole lot!

Send no money—simply mail the card.

We take all the risk—mail your order today.



Keep this letter as your guarantee, and mail the handy card—**TODAY.**

Be sure to get the enclosed order blank in the mail immediately.

Do not delay—do it today.

Simply check and return the card today.

Don't disappoint me—I shall expect your check by return mail.

Tear off the coupon and mail it with your order at once.

Put your check in the enclosed envelope, and mail it before you forget.

There is no red tape about it—simply mail the card.

Defy the summer slump by using the enclosed envelope.

So do the right thing by yourself—mail the card today.

Don't bother to write a letter. Just drop the card in today's mail.

Return the card now while you have it on your mind.

Just O. K. the card, and tell your secretary to be sure it is mailed promptly.

You will save yourself embarrassment by getting a check to us this week.

On the enclosed card let us know what you want.

Our supply is limited—use the blank today.

No satisfaction—no charge. Send no money. Simply mail the card.

There are no strings to this offer—just wire how many.

Your credit is good. Tell us what you need.

The card, mailed at once, will start the ball rolling.

It's your move. A telegram will get the order to you in ten days.

Come, come. Send a check immediately, so we can both stop worrying about this account.

The minute you tell us what you will need, the best assortment will be reserved for you. But tell us today.

Don't order your Spring stock until Bert Bemis gets to your store. He is worth waiting for, and will be in to take your order by the 15th.

No effort was made to sort these letters by purpose or style. If they are at all similar, it is because the writers were skilled in letter



carpentry, and used the technique which they knew would get the best results.

*Stilted endings break the charm.* Remembering that the function of the Hook is to get quick action before the reader has a chance to cool off, you can understand why whiskers are taboo in the close of a business letter. Many a letter, otherwise good, is spoiled when the writer by force of habit thinks he must sign off with one of the old-time conventional phrases. For instance, here is a follow-up of a railroad agent's call; the purpose is to urge transportation by rail instead of by air. The Hook is the second to last paragraph, and it is sadly weakened by "if" and "hope." The last sentence, done in the way of great-grandpappy, is pure verbiage, and serves no purpose except to weaken the close.

Dear Mr. Doe:

I appreciated the opportunity to talk with you regarding our service from Chicago to Seattle.

In checking with our General Office we have been able to confirm the "On-Time" performance of Train 1 arriving Seattle. It has been exceptionally good, and you can depend on an early arrival the morning of June 13, by leaving here the night of June 10.

The roundtrip firstclass fare is \$90.30—lower berth \$16.55 in each direction, or \$29.80 for a single bedroom.

*If* you decide to use the rail lines, and I certainly *hope* you do, please give me a ring, and I will make the reservations you desire, and deliver transportation to you.

Anticipating the pleasure of your patronage, I am

Yours very truly,

This letter first accomplished two good things. It renewed the personal contact, and it cleared the questionable point of arrival on time. Then it began to slip. If the figures mentioned were considerably lower than the cost of air travel, that fact was a trump not played. Neither were any other reasons offered which might have induced the reader to look more favorably on rail transportation. No, the writer only "hoped" for a decision his way. Then at the end he came out with a whisker which completely put out the fire.

The following letter is quite bright and interesting except for the rather tepid conclusion.

Dear Miss Ruhl:

It's Springtime . . . glorious Springtime here in the mountains . . .



. . . and that means handclasps, smiles, and greeting old acquaintances here at Sunrise Lodge. For at this marvelous season of the year many of our old friends visit us for a week-end, or a whole week of relaxation in the sublime beauty and restfulness of Spring in the famous Blue Ridge Mountains.

All nature seems to be saying "Welcome back to Sunrise Lodge" and with Easter coming so late this year you can spend a most enjoyable Easter week-end at Sunrise!

Our season will open on Friday, April 19th. Decide now to be among those present during the colorful Easter opening . . . renewing fond friendships here at Sunrise Lodge.

I have not missed a Springtime here in the mountains for thirty-five years, and I can't recall that the surrounding hills and valleys were ever more beautiful than they are this Spring. The vast panorama of nature's richest green and brown is a fairyland of enchanting colors. So you will surely enjoy your restful visit to Sunrise Lodge more than ever before.

The rates are very modest—\$25.00 a week and up for single rooms and meals, or \$4.00 daily.

Write to me immediately for your Easter reservations, or 'phone 7-1135, and I will have everything in readiness for you.

[This is where the letter should have stopped. The urge for action has been made—and it is positive. But no, the writer was not content. So a new sentence drags in another sales point apart from Easter, and then a second sentence beginning with "May" spoils the positive urge for action.]

You *might* also let me make reservations now to assure your favorite room for your summer vacation.

*May* I have the pleasure of hearing from you in the near future?

Cordially yours,

There is absolutely nothing that can be said in favor of stilted, moth-eaten language when used *any* place in a business letter. You have accepted that fact from the discussion in Section 2, and you will never be guilty of the practice in your own letters. But these old-time whiskers are particularly harmful at the time when action is being requested. The reader has been carefully nursed along through the early stages of attention and interest. As the Hook is reached, he is as close to saying "yes" as he ever will be, but he is still undecided, torn between desire and caution. And then, at this extremely delicate point in the psychological process, along comes a sentence so stiff and meaningless that the effect is like pouring a glass of ice-water down the reader's back. That is



exactly what happened in the letter selling Sunrise Lodge. The climax was reached in "and I will have everything in readiness for you." That was a confident assertion. The writer *expected* favorable reaction. Period! So it would have seemed had he stopped there. But then came the glass of ice-water—"May I have the pleasure of hearing from you in the near future?"

So often you hear it said: "I never know what to say at the end of my letters," as if when the job is done there still must be a final flourish. This is nonsense, but it probably explains why so many business letters are handicapped by a totally unnecessary closing sentence, done in the best style of 1776, when men wore buckled shoes, knee breeches, and powdered wigs. The time to stop is when you've "had your say." Anything additional is superfluous, and only tends to chill the interest you have worked so hard to develop in the mind of the reader. If you, too, are one of those who "never know what to say" to finish off your letters, here is the answer to your problem. It's quite simple—say *nothing*. To prove that's good advice, consider this final example—the close of a letter soliciting club memberships.

It costs nothing to be one of us. You simply pay \$15 a year, and get twelve good meals for your money. There is nothing more to spend. So fill out the application blank, and return it with your check. Do this right away, so you can be with us next Wednesday.

Not a bad Hook, is it? The job is done. Put away your tools, Mr. Letter-Carpenter. You will probably get the check, and greet a new member next Wednesday. But wait a minute. What's this queer stuff you have added?

Thanking you for your kind consideration of the advantages of membership in our organization, and trusting you will see your way clear to acceptance of this invitation, we remain, yours very truly,

Ho, hum, fiddle-de-dum! Another letter spoiled by that impulse to add just a little bit more. And what a contrast there is between the tone of the first paragraph, and the fish-market smell that pervades the second. Could it possibly be the same man that dictated both of those paragraphs? Why not? You see numerous examples of the same sort in every-day business correspondence.

*Avoid the divided urge.* It is a trait of human nature that if a man is told to do *one* thing, he may go ahead and do it, but if given the choice of *two* things, he is quite likely to do neither. An understanding of this fact will prevent a very common mistake in closing



business letters—the divided urge for action. The following Hook taken from a collection letter illustrates the common fault of a divided appeal.

Five dollars a week will clean up the balance in one year. If you cannot make payments that large, then send us three dollars every week—or, start with one dollar if that's the best you can do. At least, it is only fair that you should write us when you will start to reduce this debt.

All right, what has the credit man told his reader? Pay five dollars a week, or three dollars, or one dollar—or at least write and tell us when you will start paying. With such a divided plea before him, to which of the four suggestions is the debtor likely to respond? Probably none of them.

Examine these three closings:

Let me tell you more about the convenience and comfort, the time and money-saving advantages of——service. Just return the enclosed card, marked for my personal attention—or call your local office, any hotel, travel bureau, or telegraph office for full information.

Don't lose a minute. Write us a letter, telegraph, or send the enclosed card right now. If you are not ready to decide now, then please drop in to see us the next time you are in our city.

And now, during March only, you can save 5%. Simply give us your order now, for delivery as late as March 30 if you wish. See your painter right away if you want his advice, or I will be glad to call and tell you exactly what paint your home should have. Phone 7-3355. Or the enclosed card mailed, will take care of everything.

In no one of these three Hooks is the suggested action specific or impelling. Instead, the many suggestions tend to confuse the readers, so that no *one best thing* is left for them to do. Thus, the situation facing the letter-carpenter as he decides what action to urge is somewhat the same as when he uses his garden hose. He may turn the nozzle to produce a strong stream of water that lands with force on a small spot, or he may turn it to produce a fine spray which gently covers a wide area with no immediate effect. It is the single, forceful stream that does the best job in the Hook. Of the many forms of action that might be requested in closing any letter, there should be one that stands out above the rest as probably the most acceptable to the reader. Concentrate your power of persuasion on that *specific* suggestion. Remember this point, because it is very important. Beware of the divided urge.



Use "*dated*" action. Here is a tip for letter-writers which is in no sense experimental or untried. It *works*. When used in your letters it *will* increase their pull. This simple device adds power to collection letters, sales letters, follow-up letters, or any other letters that ask for reader reaction. It has been thoroughly tried and tested. Use *dated action*.

What *is* dated action? Well, instead of telling your reader what to do in a general or vague fashion, as so often happens in business letters, *set a time limit*. Tell him *when* the reply is expected.

We will expect this check not later than *next Saturday*.

An *immediate reply by airmail* will enable us to ship your order day after tomorrow.

We must hear from you by *June 1*.

Doctor, in order to handle this claim promptly for your patient, it will be necessary to have your preliminary report by the *end of this week*.

Joe, be sure to give us this information along with the Daily Sales Record that you mail us *Thursday evening*.

This letter leaves for your city this evening. By using the enclosed stamped airmail envelope, you can get your reply back to us on *Friday*.

The lawyers will be ready to take over week after next. You still have ten days—until *December 31*—to spare yourself this trouble.

There is something about a *dated* request for action that makes it get preference over the one which goes at the job in a more general way.

Please let us have your reply at your *earliest convenience*.

Your *prompt* reaction to this proposition will be appreciated.

We shall expect to receive this report in the *near future*.

A check *without delay* is necessary to put your account in proper order.

Return the order blank *soon* so that no sales will be lost.

Such generalities sound all right, but apparently they do not prod a reader to quick action. In fact, do they *ask* for it? How early *is* "earliest convenience"? How near *is* the "near future"? How soon *is* "soon"? You see, generalities are hard to pin down. To one hundred people, you can say, "not later than *June 1*," and they all know exactly how much time has been allowed. To the same



group, "in the near future," might be interpreted a hundred different ways, depending on the disposition and time-habits of each individual. Furthermore, when a *specific date* is suggested, the obligation of meeting that date tends to form in the reader's mind. It is something definite to remember. He has been told what to do and *when*. Quite often, he *does* it.

In this connection, the experience of an insurance company in Massachusetts is enlightening. One of the thorns in the flesh of this company was the time it took to get reports from examining physicians who were located all over the country. By test, over a three months' period, it was determined that after a certain blank was mailed, it was necessary on the average to follow each doctor 3.7 times by letter to get the blank back to the home office. In the department handling these follow-ups, eight full-time girls were employed. Only generalities were used to ask for action, such as, "We know you are busy, doctor, but won't you please get this blank back to us as *soon as possible*?"

Then it was decided to try *dated* action. All of the closing paragraphs in the follow-up letters were revised accordingly. The department head was willing to give the idea a trial, but he was quite sure it would make no difference. That opinion, however, he was very happy to change after another three-month test. With the action *dated*, the same follow-up letters were reduced to an average of 2.1 times per blank mailed. Not only were three girls eliminated in the department, but clients with claims were given quicker service.

When preparing the Hook for your next letter—sales, collection, or otherwise—be sure to ask for *dated* action. Say **WHEN** it is expected.

*Make the action as easy as possible.* Probably it is true that human beings tend to follow the path of least resistance. Hence, in asking for action at the close of a business letter, common sense tells us to spare the reader as much time and bother as possible. How often we are tempted to say "yes" after reading a fast moving, interesting letter, only to hesitate and then push it aside because at the end we are asked to fill out a long blank, answer a questionnaire, or just go to the bother of replying by letter. How often, on the other hand, we do say "yes" because there is only a card to sign, with the postage taken care of—nothing to do but put the thing in the mail.

The majority of the people you meet will tell you that they don't like to write letters, and perhaps this is understandable when you remember that eight steps must be taken to dictate and mail one. Do you doubt that? Well, count them. 1. Dictate or write in



longhand. 2. Proofread for errors. 3. Add the signature. 4. Fold and enclose. 5. Seal the envelope. 6. Address it. 7. Fix the stamp. 8. Mail. Just a lot of little things to do, except the dictation or writing, but a ten to twenty minute job just the same, and big enough to cause many a letter never to be answered.

You are, of course, familiar with the devices used by letter-carpeners to make action easy. The most common is an already-addressed card that needs only initials or a signature. When the postage is prepaid that's all the better. The enclosing of a stamped and addressed envelope is another action producer, especially if genuine United States postage stamps are used instead of the permit privilege. Receiving a stamp is, to most people, no different than receiving the equivalent in money. How, then, can an honest person keep the stamp and not reply? Of course, it can be argued that the reader didn't ask for the stamp, and is not bound to return it. That is true, but nevertheless there does seem to be a moral obligation to *use* the stamp.

Another very good plan for easing the reader's burden in making the expected reply is to tell him, "Just *initial* the carbon copy of this letter, put it in the stamped envelope, and it will come back to us in a jiffy." A busy man appreciates such an act of consideration. He initials the carbon copy, hands it with the envelope to his secretary, and his part of the job is done.

When order blanks are enclosed, they should be made as "short and sweet" as possible with specifications already typed in, unless these are subject to the will of the reader.

Requesting that a telephone number be called, easy as the task may be, is not always a suggestion that wins favorable response. Some people shrink from a telephone call for fear that pressure may be put on them when the connection is made. We know of no test to prove it, but in our opinion a letter asking that a card be returned will usually outpull one asking for telephone calls.

In comparative analysis, the value of these plans to make action *easy* must depend on such variable factors as the nature of the problem at hand, the relationship between writer and reader, and those other conditions which are never fixed or static. The letter-carpeners build to fit the particular time and need.







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## SECTION

# 4

## BUSINESS LETTER MECHANICS

### *1. First Impressions*

*Fine feathers make fine birds.* In the previous section when we had the Star under the microscope, we found that letters, like people, make a first impression which may or may not be helpful when the final effect is weighed. Since the factors which contribute to this first impression can be controlled, and may be as perfect as you are willing to make them, they can very properly be called the “mechanics” of letter-writing. There is no reason in the world why the correspondence of any company cannot enjoy the advantages of a nice-looking letterhead, precision typing, and those other features that help to make a pleasing appearance. Anything short of this ideal can only be attributed to the indifference or ignorance of those responsible.

Furthermore, the attainment of distinction in appearance is not an item of great expense, because it may often cost just as much to prepare and mail sloppy, unattractive letters as those others which reflect pride and quality. True, the initial expense of a fine letterhead, designed and printed by craftsmen, may be higher than that of one which is cheap and commonplace, but the difference is many times offset by the better reception it is sure to get. The other factors, mostly in the hands of the typist, have no expense angle, and depend simply on the standard of performance which is considered acceptable. It costs no more to type fifty good-looking letters than to type fifty inferior ones. In fact, the girl who takes pride in her work is more likely to exceed the production of the one who is careless and not at all interested in making each letter reflect top quality.

We may therefore agree that the appearance of a company's letters depends largely on the attitude of those “higher-ups” who have the authority to set the standards and to insist that they be met. If the president, the department head, and the dictator are not sufficiently interested to make sure that the letters reflect the same quality claimed for the company's products, then obviously the



standards will be low and the performance inferior. But when you encounter an organization where the crusade for better letters has adequate leadership, plus the willingness to supply modern equipment, it is sure to follow that those of the rank and file are encouraged to do their best to keep in step.

It is hard to understand why any business executive would *not want the letters of his company to make a pleasant first and last impression*. When we remember, as was explained in Section 1, that letters are definitely a part of public relations, we realize that any indifference toward them is a form of business negligence. This, of course, is a condition not found in business as a whole, although there are still many lamentable examples of companies handicapping their own public relations with letters written on old-fashioned letterheads, typed in a slam-bang manner, and giving off an odor of indifference which smells to Heaven.

"Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy . . . rich not gaudy . . . for the apparel oft proclaims the man," said Polonius to his son. "Costly thy letters as thy purse can buy . . . rich not gaudy . . . for the appearance oft proclaims the company," says Good Judgment to the business executive.

*Impression begins with the envelope.* This is not the place to discuss the various types of envelopes used in business, the value of color, or the different kinds of postage, but it is important that we recognize the relation of the envelope to the reader's first impression of a business letter. This reader may be a housewife who has just taken the letter from the box hanging outside the door, a farmer just in from the field he is plowing, or a business man who prefers to open his own mail when he gets to his office. In either case the letter is unread, for the envelope must still be opened. For a few fleeting seconds, only that envelope speaks for the writer or the company he serves.

In some cases, this envelope may be a "dead give-away." The recipient can tell at a glance that it is a form letter or circular. Designed to look like an ordinary sealed envelope, it has one end open, which seldom deceives anybody. Instead of the three-cent stamp, which would indicate a first-class letter, there is the insignia for the smaller amount made with a postage-meter. The name and address are obviously stamped from a stencil. Everything on the envelope plainly says: "You are getting this letter because your name was on the list." Moreover, as is so often the case with these mass-mailings, the paper and the printing are cheap and "circular" looking.

"Huh," the recipient says to himself, "somebody else wants to sell me something I don't want. Couldn't be important or it



would have been mailed first-class. Why bother to read it?" And he *doesn't*.

In pleasing contrast is the letter which arrives in an envelope made of good quality paper, the name and address typed neatly and correctly, and a three-cent stamp giving it an air of importance. The "feel" of the paper is good, the typed address is flattering, and the stamp says "Personal." The letter inside may turn out to be a form mailing, but the man with the envelope in his hand cannot know it. There is always something rather exciting about getting a personal letter, especially if the name of the company is unknown to the recipient. "Who are they?" he asks. "Wonder what they want. Guess I'd better open it and see." And he *does*.

Naturally, you know that open-end envelopes that travel at a lower postage rate have a service to perform in the business world. You know also that stenciling machines and postage-meters also are necessary for certain purposes. But there can be no argument about the comparative pull of a letter which travels first-class and one that takes advantage of these mass-production devices. For best results, when the cost is not prohibitive, use an envelope that speaks for quality, seal it, personalize the address, and up in the right-hand corner put one of Uncle Sam's genuine three-cent postage stamps. If you really want to attract the attention that transcends all others, make that stamp an air-mail.

*Two letters of contrasting appearance.* The impression made by the envelope is only the first hurdle that must be taken if the attention of the reader is to be retained. The second is the one made by the letter itself when it is unfolded. Here again, the cause may be lost if that first glance is displeasing. What the letter *says* might be interesting and convincing, but it is worthless unless the recipient decides to read it. This he is not likely to do, unless there is something in that first impression to gain favorable attention.

For example, on the following pages are two letters, one to sell neckties, and another extending an invitation to visit a book shop. Examine them as if you had just drawn them from the envelopes. Irrespective of copy, which you have not started to read, what impressions do they make? We can guess your reaction.

The letter about the neckties resembles an old-time handbill—every inch of space crowded with a conglomeration of pictures, type of various kinds and sizes, and the inevitable coupon. All in all, the layout is about as horrible as anything you could imagine. The printed part is an eighth of an inch off register, and crooked. In the original, three of the ties, the coupon, and the printer's type are in a bright red, making the whole effect even worse than the reproduction.



DISTRIBUTORS OF MEN'S FINE NECKWEAR --- SOLD EXCLUSIVELY BY MAIL

VALUES  
from  
\$1. to \$1.50  
NOW  
59c

*Don't Throw Me Away*

Gentlemen:

You can now buy ties from us for 59¢ each - the same ties that are retailing elsewhere for twice that price, or more. You can buy our ties at this great saving, with pleasant and unusual convenience.

With your permission, we will send you a complete assortment of twenty-four BEAUTIFUL NEW NECKTIES. You may purchase any that appeal to you, and can return the balance to us, no matter how many or how few that might be. You have only to pay us for those you retain. With each necktie you buy, you will receive a written guarantee. If in any way you do not get perfect satisfaction in the merchandise you buy from us, we will either refund your money, or send you new neckties for any ties returned to us.

Groups of men in every large city are pooling their neckwear purchases and buying from us this way. It is our only method of selling ties. We have only one price and sell only to groups of men who will take the trouble to get together to save money on their neckwear.

If you folks are interested, please fill out the enclosed card. We wish particularly to call your attention to the fact that the only obligation you incur in so doing, is to return the ties if you decide not to buy any, or to pay for those you keep and return the balance.

Thank you,

THE GUARANTEE GIVEN WITH EACH TIE  
READS AS PRINTED BELOW:

Money Back Guarantee	
This is guaranteed to give perfect satisfaction. If in any way this necktie does not give you the wear and value of a retail \$1.00 Tie, return this guarantee with worn tie and we will refund your money or a new tie by return mail.	
Fill Out Here	
Name .....	Money Back ( )
Address .....	New Tie ( )

P. S. Our ties are Hand Tailored - not machine made. They are constructed with 100 per cent wool interlining, insuring much longer wear and much better tying qualities. Their Resilient construction is found only in the finest ties.



ONLY  
59c

ALL OUR  
NECKTIES

are

*Hand  
Tailored*

100% Wool  
Interlined

Resilient  
Construction

Beautifully  
Silk Tipped  
At Both Ends

**MONEY BACK  
OR NEW TIE  
GUARANTEED  
WITH EACH  
TIE YOU BUY**

## TOO MANY ILLUSTRATIONS SPOIL THE WHOLE EFFECT

Would you be likely to read this letter? We doubt it. You would judge the quality of the ties by the cheapness of the presentation, and unless we are mistaken the wastebasket would receive, but quickly, another example of poor salesmanship.

But what about the book-shop letter? If you like the reproduction you would be even more impressed by the original. The paper is at least fifty per cent rag content, and the color is a pleasing and





**BOSTON BOOK AND ART SHOP** 400 *Boylston Street*  
*Books on Fine and Applied Art*  
*Telephone* KENMORE 5762 **BOSTON**

Mr. John R. Lamphure,  
 79 Queensborough St.,  
 Boston, Mass.

Dear Mr. Lamphure:

At the suggestion of our mutual friend Mr. Hope, it gives us great pleasure to extend to you an invitation to visit our Shop.

As Mr. Hope has probably told you, we have a large and varied stock of books of the better type, including limited editions and press books printed by the most famous presses in the world.

We specialize in books on Fine and Applied Art and shall be glad to help you solve the problems relating to your special field. You will find that we have some unusual books on Architecture, Illustration, Textiles, Costume Design, Ornament, Poster Art, Typography, etc., etc.

Trusting that you will favor us with an early visit, we beg to remain

Very cordially yours,

BOSTON BOOK & ART SHOP

RR:B

Abraham Bornstein.

AS NEARLY PERFECT AS A LETTER COULD BE

delicate yellow. The letterhead is printed in brown, and the letter is typed in the same color—a perfect match. In contrast to the other letter, which ran all over the page and almost fell over the edges, this one has wide margins and is beautifully balanced. The entire ensemble reflects the quality of this shop and the books for sale there. We cannot imagine a letter so pleasing to the eye being tossed into the wastebasket.



Recall that you were judging these two letters only by the first-glance impression. You can see that the copy in the book-shop letter had a great advantage over the copy in the other, but here's the joker. Go ahead and read the letter about the neckties, and you will find it isn't bad. The language is natural, and the argument rather persuasive. In contrast, you will find at the bottom of the book-shop letter an antiquated "sign-off" sentence that seems to spoil what would otherwise be a perfect presentation.

Perhaps you are saying that the average company would not care to use letterheads as expensive as this one belonging to the Boston Book and Art Shop. That is true, although you could be reminded that "expense" is only a relative term, and cannot be fairly estimated apart from results. The letterhead is printed in only one color, and the assumption is that a brown typewriter ribbon costs no more than a black one. The extra cost is only in the superior quality of the paper, which is insignificant when reduced to the unit cost of a sheet and envelope.

However, even when plain stock is used and the printing is a simple black on white, a letter can still be made to catch favorable first attention if the design of the letterhead is in good taste, and the printer and typist do their part. The following letter about Bowers Marine Batteries is a fine example. It is quite inexpensive, but speaks eloquently for teamwork in attaining a quality impression. A letterhead plus typed copy can put its best foot forward gracefully without costing any more than one which stubs its toe.

*It didn't practice what it preached.* A few years ago, the owner of a printing firm in a northwest city decided to mail a sales letter to several thousand companies in the same area. As you can see, the emphasis in the message was on quality of work and service.

Gentlemen:

#### A VERY INTIMATE PERSONAL WORD . . .

Our press is a capable organization engaged in assisting a few select clients with their direct mail advertising.

In short our policy is -- to do addressing, folding and mailing . . . perfectly, promptly, and in such a satisfying manner that you will not only employ our services, but gladly recommend them to your most intimate business friends.

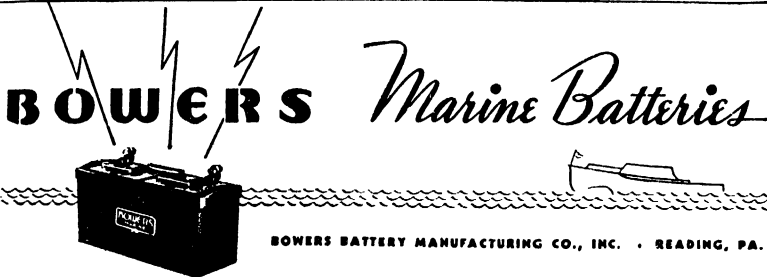
Just last week a large store in this city requested us to take charge of a small mailing. They were so completely satisfied with our work, that today we have been informed that hereafter all their direct mail pieces will be sent from our offices. Confidence like this must be deserved. It is the inevitable result of our policy—"NOT HOW MUCH BUT HOW WELL."



We hold convincing evidence that large corporations do appreciate honest service; that they welcome being treated as we would want them to treat us. Our old friends are long familiar with this policy; our new friends will cordially endorse it.

Your telephone provides an easy way for you to immediately ask any questions which may have occurred to you while reading this letter. Just call Main 6663 and we can talk about it right now.

Sincerely yours,



Jones Manufacturing Co.  
Reading, Penna.

Gentlemen:

I want to thank you personally for your inquiry card asking for more information on our Modern Marine Batteries.

The first thing I did was turn your card over to Mr. H. O. Farlin, head of our Marine Battery Division, telling him to call on you as soon as he possibly can to give you complete information about our line of Marine Batteries and our new factory-to-dealer proposition.

You will find Mr. Farlin's story very interesting and he will gladly answer any questions you wish to ask. He will tell you how the name "Bowers" earned a reputation for highest quality and integrity for fifteen years, during which time we have manufactured power batteries for every purpose and shipped them to all parts of the world.

I wish to remind you that our Marine Batteries are practically "custom built" with hand-pasted plates and that only the highest quality materials obtainable are used, making every Bowers the ultimate in Marine Batteries.

You will find both Mr. Farlin and myself willing to cooperate with you in giving you further information about our product and our policy at any time.

Sincerely yours,

President

A LETTERHEAD BUILT AROUND THE PRODUCT



While the above copy is not outstanding, it does preach from start to finish a sermon of painstaking, dependable performance. But unfortunately, the letter—a sample of what it talked about—did not practice what it preached. The chief offender was the typist whose touch was so erratic that it could be called no touch at all. Some of the letters are barely visible; others stand out like a sore thumb. Adding to the general messy appearance is an error corrected in ink. The talk about fine workmanship is belied by the company's very unsightly sample.

The man who sent the letter was surprised when it did not pull any telephone calls. He vowed he would never send out another sales letter—it was plain that new business could be obtained only by personal solicitation. What he didn't realize was that to talk about quality is one thing, but to demonstrate it is another. He had the chance to sample his wares in a pleasing way, but he fumbled. The letter could not possibly gain a favorable first impression. It is doubtful if many who were on the list to receive it even bothered to see what it said.

A letter which worked under exactly the same conditions, but far more effectively, is the one on page 221. Here, the writer who signs himself as "One of the Folks," is attempting to sell business stationery of high quality. In one place he says: "Nothing can call attention to your name and product more quickly than a distinctive letterhead." Thus, he puts himself squarely on the spot, for unless his own letter makes a fine impression, the claim of quality is sure to backfire. This challenge was well met. The letterhead is distinctive, although the reproduction in one color does not reveal its full charm. In the original, the building is a subdued shade of yellow and the trees are light green. The whole combination is delightful to the eye. The copy seems to be multigraphed, although the "fill-in" is so well matched that the effect is one of a perfectly typed letter. The paper is of fine quality, and of twenty-pound weight.

In this case the writer also set out to sample his wares, but he made a *good job* of it. It is easy to predict that this sales letter did produce a satisfactory number of replies, and also proved that new business can be gained by mail solicitation.

## 2. Letterheads

*The two objectives.* To be called *completely* adequate, a business letterhead should accomplish two purposes. The first is that of winning favor and prestige for the company by fine appearance. The second is to provide for the reader such information as he may



The  
FOLKS



PLANNERS - CREATORS AND PRODUCERS  
*Distinctive Business Stationery*

ON GOSPEL HILL MARION, OHIO

Anchor Products Company, Inc.  
Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen:

Notice the attached letterheads, please!

No, don't compare them with your own heading yet -- just finish this little missive first. Thanks!

Hundreds of America's foremost companies come to us for their business stationery each year. And by so doing, they have increased their prestige among their customers and their competitors' customers.

If you will only check the enclosed specimens against your own letterhead, you'll see the reason why.

Nothing can call attention to your name and product more quickly than a distinctive letterhead -- a heading which can make your letter your most effective advertisement.

Don't you want us to tell you how your letterhead can become your Master Salesman?

It won't cost one red cent.

Now what do you say? Just drop us a line ... we'll do the rest.

Cordially yours,

*Stanley A. Dale*

SAD:MOC

One of the FOLKS

*"Your Letterhead Is Your Master Salesman"*

need if convenient contact with the company is to be continued. The two purposes are not unrelated, since the necessary information must be woven into the layout without the sacrifice of charm, and that is not always an easy compromise. Granted that the utility purposes of the letterhead come first, and that certain factual information is a "must," it is also true that charm and simplicity go together. It is a needless handicap to clutter the layout with items that might just as well be omitted.



It is impossible to set forth any *one* combination of facts that all letterheads should include. They vary according to the nature of the business, its location and prominence, and the judgment of the executives who must make the decision. In general the following information may be considered necessary.

1. The full name of the firm or individual
2. Name of city and state
3. The zone number when one has been assigned
4. Location or equivalent—such as street address, name of building, or box number
5. The telephone number

In some cases, it is also advisable to identify the nature of the business by a descriptive line, a commercial slogan, a trademark, or perhaps a picture of the product or building. It is scarcely ever necessary to use more than one of these identification devices although you may have seen letterheads which run “hog-wild” with all of them. If not, be patient. We have some to show you.

The main idea back of the decision as to what information should be on the letterhead is that of *convenience* to the reader. Anything that at one time or another he may actually *need* should be provided for him. Anything else is likely to be an impediment to the other purpose, which is to make the letterhead as fine-looking as possible. Irrespective of what facts are finally selected to appear on the letterhead, the design and production should not be left to amateurs. There are experts who specialize in planning business letterheads, and money spent for their help is a wise investment. Once the design is chosen, it is likely to be used for several years, and it would be poor economy to save a few dollars at the sacrifice of interest-value and charm. Furthermore, the very best printer, lithographer, or engraver is none too good, no matter what the cost may be, when it comes to getting the perfect job you are after.

*History of the business letterhead.* An inspection of letterheads used only forty or fifty years ago will reveal the startling changes which have taken place in both form and content. In the Victorian days of coal-oil lamps, horse-drawn buggies, and stilted letter-language, the average letterhead was a sight to behold. Not only was the printing and design extremely crude, but the items depicted included everything from “soup to nuts.” Shaded letters, scrolls, flags, pictures of buildings and officials, all contributed to the confusion, and if a few clouds hovered over the whole that was the final touch of elegance. Plus all these pictorial effects, the



A MONTGOMERY WARD PRES.  
GEO R THORNE VICE PRES.

W.C. THORNE 2<sup>ND</sup> VICE PRES & GENL. MGR

CHAS H THORNE TREAS  
GEO A THORNE SECY

ESTABLISHED 872 INCORPORATED 1889  
CAPITAL & SURPLUS \$ 2,500,000.00

THE GREAT  
MAIL ORDER  
HOUSE.

*Montgomery Ward & Co.*

IMPORTERS.  
MANUFACTURERS  
AND JOBBERS.

111 to 120 Michigan Ave  
Chicago, May 20th. 1896

Graphophone Dictation J.R.  
Transcriber # 46

Mr. J.R. Harmon,

Box 400, Mt. Carmel, Wabash Co. Ill.

Dear Sir:-

We have received your letter of recent date in which you ask for quotations on the Life of Napoleon Bonaparte by Abbott and in reply we quote you the History of Napoleon Bonaparte by Jacob Abbott with maps and illustrations and portraits on steel, two volumes, royal 8 vo. cloth binding- publisher's price \$5.00; our price \$3.50; sheep binding \$8.00; our price \$5.50; postage extra per set 64c/

We have also Napoleon Bonaparte at St. Helena by Jacob Abbott, containing interesting anecdotes and remarkable conversations of the Emperor during the five and one half years of his captivity. Royal 8 vo. cloth, publisher's price \$2.50; our price \$1.75; or in sheep binding \$4.00; our price \$2.80; postage extra 24c/.

Under separate cover we forward you our general Catalogue #61 for which you remitted 15c to cover the transportation charges on same. Hoping we shall be favored with a continuance of your orders, we are,

Yours truly,  
Montgomery Ward & Co.,

## TYPICAL LETTERHEAD OF FIFTY YEARS AGO

names of company officials were often included, the date when the company was established, the date of incorporation, the amount of the capital and surplus, and whole paragraphs of information about terms, prices, and products. All in all, the result was a jumbled mess, but in those days it may have been considered quite distinctive.



*Montgomery Ward letterhead of the Gay Nineties.* If the above seems to be an exaggerated description of the Victorian letterhead, before you become too positive in that assumption examine the letter written on Montgomery Ward stationery, dated May 20, 1897.

There they are, the flag, the building, the shaded type in script, the clouds, the names of officials, and other factual information!



*Montgomery Ward & Co.*  
CHICAGO AND KANSAS CITY

*Any goods purchased from us that are not entirely satisfactory for 157-124-5000 (MONTGOMERY) may be returned to us within ten days with the original receipt and we will at once refund purchase price together with the amount paid for transportation charges. No refund customers will be allowed for future business privileges as if they were on our return. In comparing prices remember that quality MUST BE CONSIDERED.*

F.E.F.-#7-3  
K-E-33404.



*Kansas City, Mo.* 12/15/96.

Mr. Horatio Durst,  
Loona, Texas.

Dear Sir:-

Since the receipt of your recent letter, the goods returned to us by you have been received, and we take pleasure in allowing you the purchase price \$4.25, to this we add \$ .85 which we estimate you expended in transportation charges, making a total of \$5.10 and you will please find same enclosed herewith.

We regret that the goods were not entirely satisfactory to you, and that you were put to the inconvenience of returning them, but we are pleased to have you avail yourself of the privilege set forth in our guarantee, as we would not have you keep an unsatisfactory article under any circumstances.

We trust that this incident will not be remembered to our prejudice in the future, and that it will not in any way affect your dealings with us, as we want you to send to us at any time for any goods you need, in the fullest confidence that we can, and we will sell you the best goods and give you the best price, and guarantee you absolute satisfaction in every purchase.

Awaiting your future orders, we are,

Yours truly,

MONTGOMERY WARD & CO.

Fhc-\$5.10  
Ehc-D.C .

STYLE HAS CHANGED LITTLE A FEW YEARS LATER



Notice, too, how well the design of the letterhead conforms with the language of the letter, which is full of the old-time whiskers. An interesting item, also, is the one at the top of the letter—"Graphophone Dictation D. H. Transcriber #26."

Nine years later (see page 224), the Montgomery Ward letterhead had been changed, although the design is quite similar in style to the earlier one. To make room for the picture of the Kansas City plant, the flag is gone. Another addition is the six-line paragraph in fine type underneath the firm name. This letter originated in Kansas City, but no doubt the same letterhead was also being used in Chicago, because both buildings are pictured. In the nine years that have elapsed, evidently "Graphophone dictation" is no longer considered noteworthy, as the mention of it has been omitted.

While it is a digression from the subject matter at hand, we call your special attention to the spirit of this letter, paragraphs two and three—a factor which even in those early days was contributing to the growth of this great company, just as it has up to our modern time.

In the lower left hand corner are the initials "D. C." presumably those of the dictator. We congratulate you, D. C., after all these many years. You spoke loyally for the company you served, and what you said is worthy of comparison with the best of our modern adjustment letters.

Okay! Back to the letterheads! You have seen the ones used in 1897 and 1906. What would you expect to see today? Well, the pendulum has swung far to the opposite direction.

## MONTGOMERY WARD

### CHICAGO 7

Yes, that is the whole of it—just the name in two words, the city, and the zone number. Simplicity in the essence! You can imagine how the old boys of the Gay Nineties would have scorned such a letterhead.

*English letterheads in the old style.* As might be expected in a country where business relationships are maintained in a very formal and dignified way, many of the letterheads used in England resemble those of half a century ago in our own nation. This does not mean that our friends across the sea are lagging behind in business practice, but they do seem to cling more devoutly to certain traditions and customs. Possibly, to their way of thinking it would



be almost a sacrilege to tamper with a letterhead which has stood the test of a hundred years or more. The fact remains that English letterheads as a rule are more old-fashioned than our own, and hence from our point of view, far less interesting. One sees the same characteristics that marked our own of the Gay Nineties—the shaded letters, trademarks, type of assorted faces, often set in curves, and a great abundance of factual information. An interesting side light about the language is that their letters usually end with “Yours faithfully,” indicating a fondness for the expression in the country from which they came. This complimentary close was quite common in our pioneer days and until the turn of the century, but now rests in limbo, or wherever departing whiskers go.

*Old-timers still common here.* It would hardly be cricket to heckle our English friends about their letterheads, for we must admit that many of the old-fashioned conservative variety are still used in the United States.

The following letterheads are conspicuous for the limited space left for typing. This may be a subtle way of making sure that the dictators will not become too garrulous. Anyway, the allotment of space for copy seems too small for the business letter of average length. Of the 93 square inches on an 8½ by 11 inch sheet, the “Angostura” letterhead allows only 36 square inches for the address, salutation, body, complimentary close, and signature. But this might be called generous compared to another letterhead, not shown, where only 28 square inches, a little less than one fourth of the total, are left blank. This may or may not be a world’s record for cramping the length of a business letter. It would be interesting to know.

Of course, the reason for the overcrowding is obvious. The parties planning the letterhead had so many items they wanted to display, and each seemed so important, that they couldn’t bring themselves to omit anything. There may even have been a debate in the office regarding the respective values of illustration and copy. Copy lost.


The letterhead with the six officials grouped in the center illustrates a very popular style of the last century. This use of photographs need not be attributed to vanity, for in those days companies were small, and the president, or other officials, might be personally acquainted with many people in the area of operation. It was probably thought that these pictures carried weight in helping to gain the goodwill of those who received the letters. And perhaps they did.

*Letterheads are not catalogs or billboards.* The illustration of a product or service on a business letterhead is not a bad idea if it can



Telephone  
MURRAY HILL 2-3270

Cable Address OYNUNIR New York  
BERT. EYE SECOND PHASE CODE




ORIGINATED  
1824 A.D.

**THE ANGOSTURA-WUPPERMANN CORPORATION**

SALES AGENCY AND LICENSEE FOR THE UNITED STATES,  
CANADA, MEXICO, CUBA AND THE PHILIPPINES  
OF **ANGOSTURA BITTERS**  
(DR. J. G. B. SIEGERT & SONS) LTD.


**155 EAST 44TH ST.**

**NEW YORK**



**32 AWARDS**  
Dr. J. G. B. SIEGERT & SONS

*Established 1824  
Over 100 Years in Use  
Made Always From  
The Same Ingredients*



**BY APPOINTMENT**

**AWARDS**

LONDON	1862	VIENNA	1873
PARIS	1867	PHILADELPHIA	1876
SANTIAGO DE CHILE	1875	SYDNEY	1879
PARIS	1878	NEW ZEALAND	1882
MELBOURNE	1880	AMSTERDAM	1883
NEW YORK	1882	LONDON	1886
CALCUTTA	1883	ST. JOHNS N.F.	1890
NEW ORLEANS	1891	KIMBERLEY	1892
JAMAICA	1891	BORD LAUK	1895
CHICAGO	1893	PARIS	1900
BRUSSELS	1897	ST. LOUIS	1904
BUFFALO	1901	TORONTO	1909
LONDON	1905	PARIS	1909
PARIS	1908	ANTWERP	1911
LUCERNE	1923	PHILADELPHIA	1926
WEMBLEY	1924	NICE	1926

**L. E. Frailey**  
4660 Ravens Wood Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Frailey:

I was very much interested in reading your book, "Smooth Sailing". Do you have any particular group of letters used for making collections or letters that could be used in a Credit Department?


If so, will you kindly mail me a set C.O.D. to the following address (up to Monday, August 28th)

154 Rogers Avenue  
Brooklyn, New York

Otherwise, the address will be the same as stated above.

Yours very truly,

THE ANGOSTURA-WUPPERMANN CORPORATION



*Established 1824  
Over 100 Years in Use*

*No other similar preparation has received as great official and public recognition by Royal Families and in Expositions as has been accorded to Dr. Siegert's ANGOSTURA BITTERS.*

M:L

*B. W. Moore*  
Asst. to General Manager

be done in good taste, and without violating the simplicity of the entire layout. You often see an attractive letterhead with a package or trademark a part of the general design—sometimes in color contrasting with that of the type. This is perfectly all right if the whole effect is pleasing, but the trouble is that too many letterheads are turned into catalogs or miniature billboards that offend the eye and destroy any chance of an attractive layout. After all, the letter should do a bigger job than the letterhead. This is an im-



**MAKERS OF GOOD MACHINERY FOR 45 YEARS**



DENTAL LABORATORY  
JEWELRY, CLOCKS  
METAL WORKERS  
MACHINERY AND  
ELECTRIC BENCHES

LEIMAN BROS. INC. CORP.  
111 RADER STREET

**LEIMAN BROS., INC.**

145 TO 181 CHRISTIE STREET

NEWARK, N. J.

TELEPHONE  
CONNECTIONS

ROTARY AIR PUMPS  
VACUUM & AIR PUMPS  
AIR MOTORS  
SAND BLASTS  
FUEL OIL BURNERS

Standard Dental Laboratory,  
449 Cutler Building,  
Rochester, N.Y.

Gentlemen:

We are in receipt of your letter of March 10th and we are sending you copy of our latest catalogue in which will be found, on page 5 at the bottom of the page, our Model 38 Dental Laboratory Polishing Dust Collecting Outfit. This is known as #5C34 and is equipped with a 1/2 HP. motor and priced at \$340.00.

Here you will find the various dimensions of the outfit and any further information will be gladly furnished on request. We can furnish this for Direct Current. Kindly advise us as to the voltage to be used.

Leiman Bros. Polishing Dust Collecting Outfits make polishing and grinding safe and a pleasure - and make it an income bringer too - pays for itself and an independent income thereafter from the dust that is now a danger and a nuisance.

Everybody agrees that breathing polishing dust is disagreeable and unnecessary and that's why we want you to banish it with Leiman Bros. Patented Dust Collector.

When you breathe polishing or grinding dust you are breathing tiny metallic particles which are removed from the surface of the article in the polishing and grinding operations.

These particles get into the lungs causing disease - you don't want that, especially when you can take these same particles of gold or other precious metals and turn them into money, filling your pocketbook instead of your lungs.

And then think of the improvement in the appearance of your workroom if there was no dust flying around and covering everything. A nice clean place to work in is a possibility.

Here too is the outfit offered as a true life insurance policy far more valuable to the user than any of the standard policies of the greater insurance companies because it does what no ordinary insurance policy can do - it prevents.

**ALL QUOTATIONS EXPIRE AFTER 10 DAYS**

ALL AGREEMENTS ARE CONTINGENT UPON STRIKES, ACCIDENTS OR DELAYS OF ANY KIND UNAVOIDABLE OR BEYOND OUR CONTROL. QUOTATIONS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

STENOGRAPHICAL ERRORS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

ALL GOODS SOLD F. O. B. NEWARK, N. J., OR POINT OF SHIPMENT

ELECTRIC MOTORS FURNISHED ARE FOR EITHER DIRECT OR ALTERNATING CURRENT.


50 CYCLES 1, 2 OR 3 PHASE 110 OR 220 VOLTS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

CONTRACTS AND ORDERS SUBJECT TO ACCEPTANCE AT NEWARK WORKS

possibility if two thirds of the page is crowded with material competing for the reader's attention.

The mailing of the Graver-Dearborn Corporation, opposite, is given a catalog appearance by the pictures of the prize items which run down the left side of the page. Take these pictures out, and the rest of the letterhead is both pleasing and distinctive. This was probably a special mailing, with the pictures added for the one purpose, but the result is quite displeasing to the eye. Also, be-




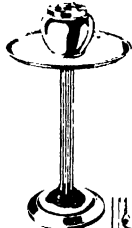
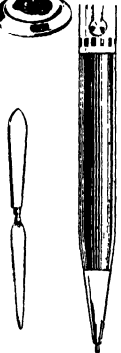



GRA-DEAR QUALITY OFFICE SUPPLIES

# Graver-Dearborn CORPORATION

118-124 SOUTH CLINTON STREET CHICAGO

TELEPHONE, RANDOLPH 7900

**THIS IS NOT A FREE OFFER**

It's better than that!

Take your pick of thousands of items you personally can use and BESIDES, show your company a flick on white, that you're saving them up to 14%. Here's how—

Remember the GRAVER-DEARBORN 24-page *My Favorite Office Items Booklet* sent you—the one announcing our new Dividend Stamp Plan? Like a lot of our other customers, you may have wondered whether you can apply the dividends against the purchase price of any article we carry. Such as—

<p>Executive Distributors    Cat. P. 265</p> <p>Scrap Books                • 63-265 : 7</p> <p>Chair Cushions            • 108-114</p> <p>Letter Openers            • 295</p> <p>Desk Clocks                • 254</p>	<p>Ass. Trays                 • 255</p> <p>Humidors                 • 264</p> <p>Automatic Pencils        • 184-86</p> <p>Embossed Letter Trays   • 265</p> <p>Memorandum Books     • 54-55</p>
---	---

and many others too numerous to mention.

**SURE YOU CAN!** Here's your chance to equip your desk and office with many up-to-the-minute time-saving devices that will make your work a pleasure.

They're all in our Complete 352-page *Office-Supply Catalog* which is yours for the asking. The inside back cover of the 24-page Booklet, which you have, will tell you how to use the dividend stamp plan—read it carefully.

Instead of using the stamps for discount purposes they may be applied against the purchase price of any article we carry, or may be accumulated "to obtain it." Say your order totals \$15.00, and \$10.00 of this amount is for items shown in our complete catalog, with the balance for merchandise shown in our 24-page *Net Price List* or the *Special Net Price Circular*, enclosed. Since the dividends apply only to prices in the complete catalog, your dividend would then be 10% of \$10.00 or \$1.00, with which you could order any \$1.00 article in the catalog.

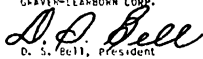
Or else save the stamps if you like, sending them in for the item you want. In this way, you can get anything you need, while cutting your office-supply cost at the same time. Remember that dividends are good only for items shown in our 352-page Catalog and not in the Booklet or Circulars we issue.

When you order from GRAVER-DEARBORN you know you are supplying your house with top-quality office needs, at prices you would ordinarily pay for inferior merchandise—prices, incidentally, that are bound to go up soon.

It's a pretty safe guess, too, that the prices on the enclosed list are most likely to go up, so make sure of quick delivery and price, by sending the attached order blank **RIGHT NOW**—include everything you need and will need. Our catalog will go out to you promptly, and you can begin getting your share of GRAVER-DEARBORN dividends right away.

Yours for dividends

GRAVER-DEARBORN CORP.



D. S. Bell, President

*"Everything from a Pin to an Office Suite"*

GLOBE-WERNICKE FILING EQUIPMENT  
ACCOUNTING AND BUSINESS PRINTING

cause of limited space, the copy is printed with typewriter type of smaller size—and even then there is no margin on the right side. The entire page has an overstuffed appearance, and the first impression is not agreeable. In some cases the letter was probably tossed aside, because the reading of it looked like too much of an effort.

Another example of robbing Peter to pay Paul is the vacation letter on page 230. The original is lithographed in several colors and although the layout is stuffy, the first impression on the average recipient may not have been unpleasant. To this, the comely



lady may have contributed. But the copy, pushed to one side, and crowded top and bottom, seems only an inconsequential part of the whole. Wait a minute. What was that we said a moment ago about the world's record among letterheads with a minimum of copy space? Why this is *it*. Ninety-three square inches available on the page, but only 17 were finally left for the copy.

*Why some executives hesitate to change.* Certain business men cling to letterheads of ancient origin because they fear a change

# Plunge into Glorious Vacation Days

Take time, it's your right, to use that vacation time when you want it.

Want to make the most of your vacation time for you to make the most of it? You can, by using the Vacation Service. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything.

With the Vacation Service, you can get the best of everything. You can get the best of everything. You can get the best of everything. You can get the best of everything. You can get the best of everything.

On Vacation Service, when you go to the beach, you'll find the best of everything. You'll find the best of everything. You'll find the best of everything. You'll find the best of everything. You'll find the best of everything.

Use the Vacation Service. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything.

Where You'll Stay: Beach, Hotel, Cabin, or Camp. You'll find the best of everything. You'll find the best of everything. You'll find the best of everything. You'll find the best of everything. You'll find the best of everything.

How You'll Travel: Plane, Train, or Auto. You'll find the best of everything. You'll find the best of everything. You'll find the best of everything. You'll find the best of everything. You'll find the best of everything.

Use the Vacation Service. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything. It's the only service that gives you the best of everything.



might result in loss to the company. They realize that the vehicle they are using is not attractive, and they would like to see it modernized. "But," they ask, "what would be the effect on sales?"

Then they go ahead with an old, old story—something like this. "The letterhead we are using has been known to our buying public for sixty years. In a pile of letters on the desk of a customer, it is recognized at first glance. It represents all of the goodwill we have been able to accumulate for the company during the many years we have been in business. This acceptance must be worth something to us. Why should we take the chance of starting all over again to develop this acceptance? After all, any long-established business has certain characteristics and trade practices which are traditional, and cannot be changed at the whim of the moment. Yes, we admit our letterhead is not modern as it would be if we were a new company. In the same sense, our company is old—very old—and we are proud of it."

This argument in favor of keeping the old letterhead would be quite convincing, except that the experience of other companies that *have* dared to make the change proves the weakness of the defense. There is nothing about a successful business that can be considered immune to the march of progress. If this were true, the argument for keeping an obsolete letterhead would apply with equal force to other "traditional" features of the company. Thus, deliveries would be made by horse-drawn trucks, packages would not be modernized and made more interesting for shelf display, windows and show-cases would be left as "they always have been," air-conditioning would be scorned, and new ideas ridiculed if they supplanted old ones. *And* soon spider-webs would be spun across the front doorways.

Any company that hopes to keep up with competition *must* change, and nothing warrants preservation unless it is still the *best* of its kind. To be sure, there probably are long-time customers who look fondly on a letterhead which has grown old with them. But to offset these few, are the many, many other people who may form the wrong impression of a company which clings to a queer, old-fashioned letterhead. "This company can't be up-to-date," they think, "look at this funny old-time stationery."

Fortunately, we do have the experience of those who have made the change to guide us, and we have never heard of any company that modernized its letterhead, used it for a while, and then went back to the old one. On the contrary, there is an abundance of evidence to prove that the modernization not only provoked favorable comment, but also led to increased sales.

A few years ago, a candy company in California had growing



pains. A new letterhead was suggested, and finally adopted. But the president couldn't help wondering whether or not a mistake had been made. So a test was devised to find the truth. A list of old buyers who hadn't ordered for several months was split in two equal parts. To one half a follow-up letter using the old stationery was mailed. To the other half, the same letter was mailed—on the new stationery. Nothing was said in the letter about the test. The readers did not know they were being used as guinea pigs. Thus, neither letterhead had any advantage over the other except for the difference in appearance, which might work either way.

What happened? At the end of thirty days, when the "votes" were counted, it was discovered that the old letterhead had pulled 15 per cent in replies, as against 40 per cent for the new one. Not all of the replies contained orders, but comparing those that did, the difference was even greater in favor of the new letterhead, the ratio being almost seven to one.

It pays to keep up-to-date. There can be no question about it. The company that sticks to an old-fashioned monstrosity is penalizing rather than helping sales.

*A guide for planning letterheads.* Turning now from letterheads of the past, which are of interest only as something to be avoided, we can proceed with the more enjoyable task of surveying those which are modern, in order to find out what are the factors which contribute to their success.

A few years ago, John L. Scott, then editor of *The Printing Art Quarterly*, and a nationally known authority on letterhead design, offered ten questions to be used as a guide in determining the effectiveness of any business letterhead or in planning a new one. These questions are:

1. Is the letterhead appropriate to *your* particular type of business?
2. Is it distinctive--original-- a letterhead that will be remembered?
3. Is it complete? Does it carry all the information--telephone, address, titles-- the reader will need in replying?
4. Is it up-to-date? Modern? Does it suggest that your business is keyed to the tempo of the times?
5. Is it professionally designed by someone who knows what it takes to make a good job?



6. Is the paper suitable? Does it reflect good taste, quality, progress?
7. Is the letterhead adaptable to various kinds of letters—long and short—to bulletins, etc.?
8. Is it well printed? Are the colors vivid? Is the register perfect?
9. Is it designed to match the envelope?
10. Does it altogether speak for the spirit of your company, and the quality of your products?

You will agree that any letterhead would have to be good to meet the standards which Mr. Scott has established in these ten questions. Another step in the same direction is the Letterhead Rating Chart reproduced on the next page. This chart was prepared for the benefit of friends and clients of the Whiting-Plover Paper Company of Stevens Point, Wisconsin. The plan of the chart is to grade the letterhead on each point, up to the maximum of 100. Then, by dividing the total of all the grades by 12 (the number of ratings) the final percentage is obtained. You will notice from the qualifying paragraph at the bottom of the chart, that the questions place the emphasis on the *utility* of the letterhead being rated, rather than on the more intangible factor of design. As the originator says, "The most beautiful letterhead, if deficient in the information it should convey, is not a good letterhead in the business world."

*Choice of paper.* Just as the beauty of a woman may be enhanced by the quality and style of the gown she wears, so may the appearance of a business letterhead be influenced by the choice of paper on which it is printed—its purity, its weight, and sometimes its color. Surely it is penny-wise and pound-foolish to skim in the selection of paper for a company's stationery, as the best costs very little compared to the other items of expense in the preparation and mailing of a business letter. (See Section 1.) Moreover, although the difference in price between a cheap sulphite bond and a paper high in rag content amounts to a considerable sum when quoted by the pound, it is really nothing to worry about when reduced to single letter-sized sheets.

In this respect, another fact worth remembering is that from the point of view of reader reaction, and the good impression you want the letter to make, it may often be true that in the long run the best paper is the cheapest. Results are what count the most in



## *Letterhead Rating Chart*

WHITING PLOVER PAPER COMPANY, Stevens Point, Wis.

For \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Business: \_\_\_\_\_

### *How well does our letterhead tell who we are?*

1. Is the name legible and clear at a glance? \_\_\_\_\_

### *How well does our letterhead tell where we are?*

2. Has it full address for convenience of out-of-town visitors? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Has it telephone number to save out-of-town customers time and trouble? \_\_\_\_\_

### *How well does our letterhead tell what we are?*

4. Is our business simply and accurately described? \_\_\_\_\_
5. If an illustration is used, is it legible, attractive and does it help tell our story? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Is the type face or lettering of good design? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Are the various elements (name, business, address, etc.) well-arranged, or are they cluttered up? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do the various elements follow in logical order, to tell their story at a glance? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Is the printing sharp, clean and attractive? \_\_\_\_\_
10. If colors are used, are they pure, of proper strength, appropriate? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Is the paper of substantial thickness, good crisp feel and proper permanence? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Is the heading equal to competitors' headings, or up to the standard of the industry? \_\_\_\_\_

Total Points \_\_\_\_\_

Divide by number of rating points used

RATING: \_\_\_\_\_

It is impossible to give a just rating without full knowledge of the letterhead user's business. But this chart puts letterhead rating on, at least, a semi-scientific basis, in which utility is considered first and design is subordinate to it. The most beautiful letterhead, deficient in the information it should convey, is not a good letterhead in the business world.

business, and if the good paper does a better job, it can easily become the most economical.

Durability is also a factor that needs consideration. The cheaper papers, made entirely from wood, will not stand as much punishment in handling, or last nearly as long, as the better papers which are either all rag, or contain a high percentage of it.



The typist, too, deserves some consideration when the choice of paper is made. It is difficult to erase without leaving a smudge when the paper is thin and made from wood fiber, and many a letter is retyped that could have been saved had the paper been of better quality.

*How quality of paper is determined.* The three factors most important in measuring the quality of paper are: (1) content, (2) weight, and (3) the mill where it is made. The third point is often a matter of opinion, although it must be conceded that some mills do a better job than others. Thus, it is well to choose paper stock which comes from a mill of good reputation, rather than from one about which you know nothing.

The unit for measuring paper *weight* is a ream of folio size. This consists of 500 sheets, 17 by 22 inches. Each of these large sheets when bisected both ways produces four pieces of the conventional business letterhead size. Hence, when 20 pound paper is mentioned, the meaning is that 2,000 sheets letterhead size weigh that much. In the same way, the weight of the ream, depending on the thickness of the sheets, may be 12 pounds, 16 pounds, 24 pounds, or a greater amount.

Twelve pound paper is very flimsy, and seldom used for business purposes. More business letterheads are printed on the 16 pound weight than on any other, although the 20 pound weight has a much better "feel" and deserves greater popularity. In many companies, letterheads on paper of different weight are provided for different uses. Thus, a 16 pound letterhead may be considered adequate for correspondence within the organization, a 20 pound letterhead used for letters to the general public, and a "super-duper" 24 pound letterhead reserved for executives.

As has been intimated, the *content* of paper used for business purposes falls into one of three classifications: that made from wood fiber, that made from cotton fiber, or a combination of the two. The cheapest papers are "all wood"—of course, they are the least durable, and make the poorest impression. Newspapers, for example, are printed on paper made from wood pulp, and so are many of the inferior magazines. In contrast, the most durable and best looking papers are made entirely from cotton fiber. Naturally, they cost the most. It is not necessary for letterhead uses, however, that the paper be "all rag." A mixture of about half and half produces a sheet that stands up well and is quite beautiful in appearance.

Compare a letterhead processed on "all wood" paper with one processed on a paper of at least fifty per cent rag content, and the



difference in quality is easily discernible. The one with the high rag content is pure white and free from imperfections. The one made entirely from wood fiber looks gray and murky by the side of the other, and here and there are brown stains which could not be removed in the milling. The one is an aristocrat, the other a tramp, in the business world. One looks good, feels good, *is* good. The other is just another piece of paper, no different from many others that may now lay on your desk. It looks cheap, feels cheap, *is* cheap.

And yet, the difference in cost between sheets of the two kinds of paper may be no more, or even less, than a penny. Even the postage on a business letter is *three* cents. Doesn't it seem poor economy *not* to use paper for your letterhead which makes a fine impression, and speaks for the quality of your products and services?

*Letterhead sizes.* Having convinced ourselves that quality paper is a good investment, all things considered, thoughts turn next to what size the letterhead should be. If general business practice is followed, the answer is  $8\frac{1}{2}$  by 11 inches. Four sheets that size cut without waste from a folio page, and that may be a minor argument for them. But there is no "law" or convention of business which prevents the use of another size if you happen to have a good reason, or even if you just like it better. Smaller sizes than the standard  $8\frac{1}{2}$  by 11, are not uncommon, although one is seldom seen any larger. For example, a size called "baronial" is often preferred by professional men, and sometimes used for the personal stationery of executives. Other variations are 8 by 11 inches,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  by  $10\frac{1}{2}$ , 7 by 10, and "half sheets" which cut eight out of one folio page. But all of these departures from the  $8\frac{1}{2}$  by 11 size are merely ripples on the main body of water.

Frankly, we do not know how this "standard" size came to be the choice of Custom. But its use is now so universal that even filing devices and equipment conform to it. For this reason alone, there appears to be no good argument for a change. The size is practical, and most people seem to like it.

A good many of the letters that come from other English speaking countries are typed on larger letterheads than our own. A sample is the one with the gun and the tiger, reproduced on page 237. The size of the original is  $8\frac{7}{8}$  by 12. The paper has an enamel finish, and the color is a light tan. This letterhead, by the way, leans toward the modern, although one flaw is the position of the gun, which seems to float in mid-air like a magician's suspended accomplice. The language, too, is far more "free and easy" than





Dear Sir,

Will you do me a favour? It will not take you as long as it does to smoke a cigarette, and I am taking the liberty of sending this enclosed.

I recently sent you my catalogue of sporting guns, and I am anxious to discover why I have not been favoured with your order.

Do not bother to write a letter, jot your remarks on the margin of this one, then slip in attached envelope, no stamp necessary, I pay postage.

Have you yet reached a decision regarding your new gun?

If not, may I hope to be favoured with your order?

If not, will you kindly give a reason?

I am anxious to discover whether my prices are wrong, or if the models offered do not appeal to you - in what way they should be modified to suit you.

I should be happy to do anything possible to meet your requirements by an adjustment of prices or terms, and your reply will help me a lot.

Yours faithfully,  
for W.W.GREENER LTD.

#### ENGLISH LETTERHEAD INTERESTING TO SPORTSMEN

that of the average English letter, and even a cigarette is enclosed for the reader to smoke—a surprising bit of showmanship to come from “St. Mary’s Row, Birmingham 4.”

This larger letter in its present condition is an object lesson of what would happen if we started to use similar sizes in our country. Having been filed in a folder suitable for the 8½ by 11 letterheads,



this English letter has had to take a lot of punishment. The edges are frayed, and in several places the page is torn.

As has been said there seems to be no serious objection to the sizes smaller than our standard  $8\frac{1}{2}$  by 11. In fact, because they are *different*, they may have the advantage of claiming special reader-attention. However, even freedom of convention may travel too far from the beaten path, as seems to be the case with the letterhead used by a newspaper editor in Missouri. Here it is, one fourth the original size, to show the proportions.



The actual size of this letter is  $6\frac{1}{4}$  by 11 inches. The stock is a pale blue, and the type is printed in red on a silver background. The general effect is startling, but not entirely pleasing. You might call it similar to seeing the "thin man" in the circus. Thin men may be more attractive than fat ones, but not, as with this letterhead, when they are only skin and bones.

*Use of colored stock.* Although white is preferred by a large majority of companies, this again is a matter of custom, and we often encounter an attractive business letterhead where tinted paper has been used. Some of these exceptions, especially those in the pastel shades, are very pleasing to the eye, and a delightful relief from the monotony of seeing everything in white. Others, from an unfortunate choice of color, would seem more appropriate for a carnival or circus than for a company which must operate with some dignity and restraint.

Certainly, there is plenty of evidence to prove that the average human being likes color, and is more pleased by the gay shades than by black or white. You see this fact reflected in the clothes we wear, the furnishings we select for our homes, and in many other ways. You may recall, for example, how one automobile manufacturer fought against colored bodies until the inroads made by competitors not so near-sighted forced him to change his mind. Look at the articles displayed by your grocer and you will see a mass of colors. Notice how the multi-colored advertisements in the magazines seem to get more attention than those in black and white. The love of color is deep-rooted in the human race, and



business men may have been missing the boat in not using more of it in their letterheads and envelopes.

To be sure, color seems more appropriate for some types of business than for others. From a lawyer, a banker, a minister, an educator, or any company related to one of these professions, a letter on colored stationery would probably arouse unfavorable comment. A letter from a broker offering an investment in stocks or bonds, would surely be handicapped if typed on colored stationery. Somehow, we expect certain professions and types of business to lean toward the conservative side, and any swing the other way is usually a dangerous experiment.

On the other hand, things bright and gay seem quite in keeping with other kinds of business activity—millinery stores, dealers in sports apparel, florists, candy manufacturers, gift shops, landscape gardeners, paint merchants, and the many, many others that you could add. Even when color seems appropriate, one shade may be better suited to a certain field of business than to another. For example, paper in a soft tint of blue might be ideal for the milliner, a canary yellow for the florist, and a light green for the landscape gardener; even those selections, however, are strictly a matter of personal opinion.

As in almost every other phase of business correspondence, and its related problems, the question of when to use a color, and of what color is best, can only be decided by good taste and sound judgment. It is important that business men always keep their minds open toward color possibilities, and that they do not turn their backs on a use that might be highly productive. After all, if a company can get a higher percentage of replies—to sales letters especially—using tinted stationery, then why should it stubbornly stick to the white?

*Showmanship from use of special materials.* Now and then a business letter gains added attention because it is *not* written on one of the customary paper stocks. Instead, in the spirit of showmanship, some other material is substituted. When the reason for the substitution is not too far-fetched, this idea can be very effective. The best of the breed, of course, are those in which the material used is an actual sample of the thing talked about in the letter.

For example, a letter mailed to school superintendents by the Omaha School Supply Company arouses immediate curiosity and interest because the copy is processed—apparently by multigraphing—on an 8½ by 11 inch piece of window-shade cloth. The fill-in of the address and salutation is perfectly done, so that the whole



effect is that of a personally typed letter. The best part of this idea, however, is that the piece of window-shade cloth is a *sample* of the product which the letter seeks to sell. Note the first paragraph.

This letter, which is written on duPont "Tontine" washable window-shade cloth, color 508 Afterglow, will introduce you to a window shade that admits light without glare.

In another paragraph, the use of the sample is given even better significance, when the writer suggests that it be put to a number of tests to prove its quality.

"Tontine" is the last word in window-shade economy, cleanliness, and durability. It can be scrubbed clean as often as soiled and it will not crack, pinhole or fade. Scrub it—scuff it—boil it. Do the same for other types and see for yourself.

A second letter that does the same double job—winning attention by an unusual approach, and sampling the product—is one used by Hoff & Company in Reading, Pennsylvania. It is one of the many clever letter ideas that have originated in the offices of advertising agents Beaumont, Heller, & Sperling. The piece of towel paper has rough edges, and is the size of a section that might have been torn from a roll in actual use. Here again, the first paragraph justifies the showmanship.

HERE'S NEWS, MR. ROGERS . . . It's an Announcement sure to interest you! It may be the first letter you've received on a paper towel, but then this letter is about the finest paper product on the market, and I'm sending my message right on that paper as PROOF.

Still more spectacular, but equally appropriate, is a letter once used by the Inland Steel Company, Chicago. You can imagine the surprise of anyone who got this message, when he pulled from a large envelope a letterhead-size sheet of metal on which the copy was quite plainly printed. Of course, no attempt was made to fill in the name and address of the recipient, but in the excitement of getting such an unusual letter, it is doubtful if that made any difference. Here is how it starts:



A word  
concerning our  
new 44" Mill

Dear Sir:

This sheet is one of the first rolled on our new 44" Continuous Strip Mill, and cold reduced on our latest type cold finishing mill.

Our new 44" Continuous Strip Mill, which has just been completed and placed in operation, is the result of the growing demand for Inland uniform quality sheets. . . .

Back in the days when Huey Long was bossing Louisiana politics, the South had a huge surplus of cotton. To help reduce the surplus, patriotic southerners conceived the novel idea of using all-cotton stationery. Accordingly, the circulation manager of *TIME* magazine, ever resourceful in the choice of sales ideas, came out with the following renewal letter to subscribers.

Dear Subscriber:

This is the all-cotton paper which Louisiana's Senator Huey Long and many other prominent Southerners are now using for their business and personal correspondence. By its use they are helping to reduce the South's cotton surplus.

We are interested in the South's attempts to reduce its cotton surplus; in the West's and Middle West's and the Government's efforts to reduce the wheat surplus. But we in the Circulation Department of *TIME* have our own crop surplus to reduce—you have guessed it—the crop of unrenewed subscriptions.

We have done amazingly well thus far with the winter crop. I hope, by sending in your renewal order today, that you will reduce it to practically zero!

Why not preserve this sheet of cotton writing paper—it will serve as a permanent memento of one of the most significant periods in the history of the U. S. and of the world.

Renewal of your subscription to *TIME* will ensure your getting the most complete, accurate week-by-week report of this exciting period in the world's history.

Sincerely yours,

You can by no means call the use of this all-cotton paper, which closely resembles a piece of white window-shade cloth, a far-fetched idea to capture favorable reader-attention. It must have aroused considerable comment, and no doubt many of the recipients *did* keep it as a memento.

On another special "paper" which appears to be the same kind of material, perhaps a piece of percale, the salesmanager of Appleford



Paper Products Limited, sent the letter below as a follow-up to prospects who had ignored previous sales attempts. Here again, the use of the fabric seems in keeping with good taste, and no doubt provoked many a smile. More important than that, it probably also brought back a good number of replies.

Dear Mr. Doe:

We do not like to think that you just read our recent letters, then tore them up and forgot all about our company, for we hold high hopes of getting your next order. We make good products, sell them at reasonable prices and ship promptly. You know that from previous orders you have sent us.

But we have not heard from you for months, so did you just tear up our letters after all?

You can tear this one up, but it will be just a little harder to r-i-p.

So save your energy to write, not rip, stating you will be sending us an order soon. There's a stamped envelope enclosed.

Very truly yours,

Obviously, letters typed on fabrics cannot be recommended as a regular diet. You can picture the trouble and confusion they would cause when it came to filing them. But surely now and then it can do no harm to get out of the rut with some novel or amusing idea which may add power and interest to the message.

Sometimes, you also see letterheads printed, and the letters typed, on paper with a wood surface finish. You might think, for example, that the letter which follows was on an actual piece of wood if you saw it on the desk of an associate. This letter was used by the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, and you may judge for yourself whether or not the idea was appropriate to the message.

### *FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH*

#### *KNOCK ON WOOD*

Probably you are not superstitious, but Friday, the Thirteenth, comes again in November.

SO -KNOCK ON WOOD!

Every day is Friday, the Thirteenth on the calendar of accidents, and to knock on wood is no guarantee of immunity.

While you read this letter, eight persons in the United States will have met with some disabling injury.

Knock on wood, and then ask us about the form of policy which will protect your income and reimburse you for medical expenses on account of accidents.

Sincerely yours,



Another letter, printed and typed on the same kind of imitation wood paper, does not rate approval as one in which the idea for getting attention has a logical connection with thought of the copy. In fact, there is no connection at all. You will have to take our word for that, as the nature of the letter is too personal for reprinting. However, when the writer signed his name in brown ink, he added in longhand the following postscript . . . "Just to prove that we 'wood' be interested, here's your answer on wood." This could scarcely be called the best of humor, and so the adaption of the idea leaves the reader not impressed. As we have seen before, dramatic ideas to win special attention can be very sweet or very sour—depending on how clever they really are, and whether or not they blend logically with the thought of the copy.

### 3. *Modern Letterhead Design*

*The trend toward simplicity.* You have seen some of the letterheads of earlier days—conglomerations of information lines and illustrations which so cluttered the page that the effect was confusion and chaos. Although they accomplished—over-accomplished—the first purpose of a business letterhead, to give the reader the factual things he needs to know, they failed utterly to accomplish the second purpose—to impress the reader by their beauty and originality of design. Now, it is fitting that you examine some of our modern letterheads, and compare the new with the old to see what progress may have been made.

We are not so bold as to attempt a complete and scientific treatise on letterhead design. This is a job which only the highly skilled commercial artist might successfully undertake, and few business men have either the time or inclination to master the principles of such a technical and specialized art. Unfortunately, a great many business men fail to recognize their limitations in this respect, or to appreciate the need of expert help. They make the mistake of planning their own letterheads, or of turning to some local printer who does not have in his shop anyone capable of doing the job. This is one of the reasons why so many modern letterheads are still commonplace, even ugly, in design. No business man of sane mind would buy a few yards of tweed and attempt to tailor himself an overcoat or suit of clothes. Why should he consider himself capable of "tailoring" his own stationery?

The one characteristic of the best modern letterheads which stands out above the rest is that of *simplicity*. This is attained by the omission of all factual information which the reader does not need, by good taste in the use of type faces and sizes, and by the



discreet application of color when it is used at all. The letterhead thus avoids that crowded appearance we saw in the "Gay Nineties" and other samples. There is plenty of space between the lines, and the one part of the whole ensemble considered most important is given the center of the stage. For example, the letterhead illustrated below is typically modern in its simplicity. It is engraved on paper of twenty-four pound weight, and speaks eloquently for the quality of the services rendered by the company for which it stands.



You will no doubt agree that this letterhead has both dignity and eye-appeal. Moreover, all the facts the reader might want are presented—firm name, nature of the business, street address, names of city and state, and telephone number. An added touch is the trade-mark, which properly gets a subordinate position in the design. Probably, the first thing you noticed was the word, "Advertising," and that is exactly why the artist gave it the focal spot in the design. The nature of the business was considered the most important item, and so it got the spotlight.

Another letterhead conspicuous for simplicity is one used by Tweed House Inc. In reproduction, it loses some of the pleasing effect, because the original was in two colors, gray and red. The nature of the business is omitted in the main design, but at the bottom of the page a line in red, in small type, reads, "Men's and Women's Clothes of Better Fabrics." Oh, yes, the paper, too, is a light shade of gray.



In the effort to use as few words as possible, the artist who designed the above letterhead left out the words "Avenue" and

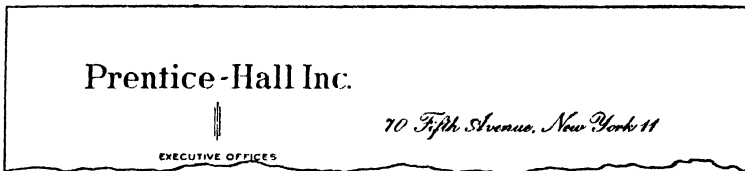


"Illinois." This was permissible, since these omissions would be understood by anyone getting a letter from "Tweed House."

The publishers of this book have several letterheads for different types of uses, but they are all distinguished by as little copy as possible. One for general purposes gives prominence to the initials P and H.



Another of these Prentice-Hall letterheads is for executive correspondence, with a design which is both modern and pleasing.



*Often a problem for the artist.* Without meaning to disparage the skill of the artists who designed the three letterheads we have just inspected, it must be conceded that in attaining simplicity they were aided by the small number of items which had to be worked into the design. But this advantage is often lacking when a new letterhead is ordered. After all, the artist must use as much material in his design as the executives of the company or organization consider desirable, although his own artistic feelings may be severely jolted. Thus, the compromise between satisfying his client and still coming up with an attractive layout may be indeed a difficult problem.

For example, consider the letterhead reproduced on page 246. We have no right to question the necessity of what appears on it. No doubt the many names and titles of important doctors are intended to win reader acceptance of the good cause; perhaps, too, the doctors themselves are somewhat inspired to "get in and pitch." Nevertheless, here is the burden this letterhead is asked to carry.

Name and location of the organization.

Names of the officials and their titles.

Names of 23 doctors who are members of the Executive Committee.

Reproduction of the Christmas Seal, and slogan urging purchase.

Line telling to whom checks should be mailed.

Union label.



# Welfare League

OF THE  
**Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium**  
OF CHICAGO

CRAWFORD AND BRYN MAWR AVENUES

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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Supt. Dispensary Service

**RALPH H. WHEELER,**  
Consultant in Industrial Surgery



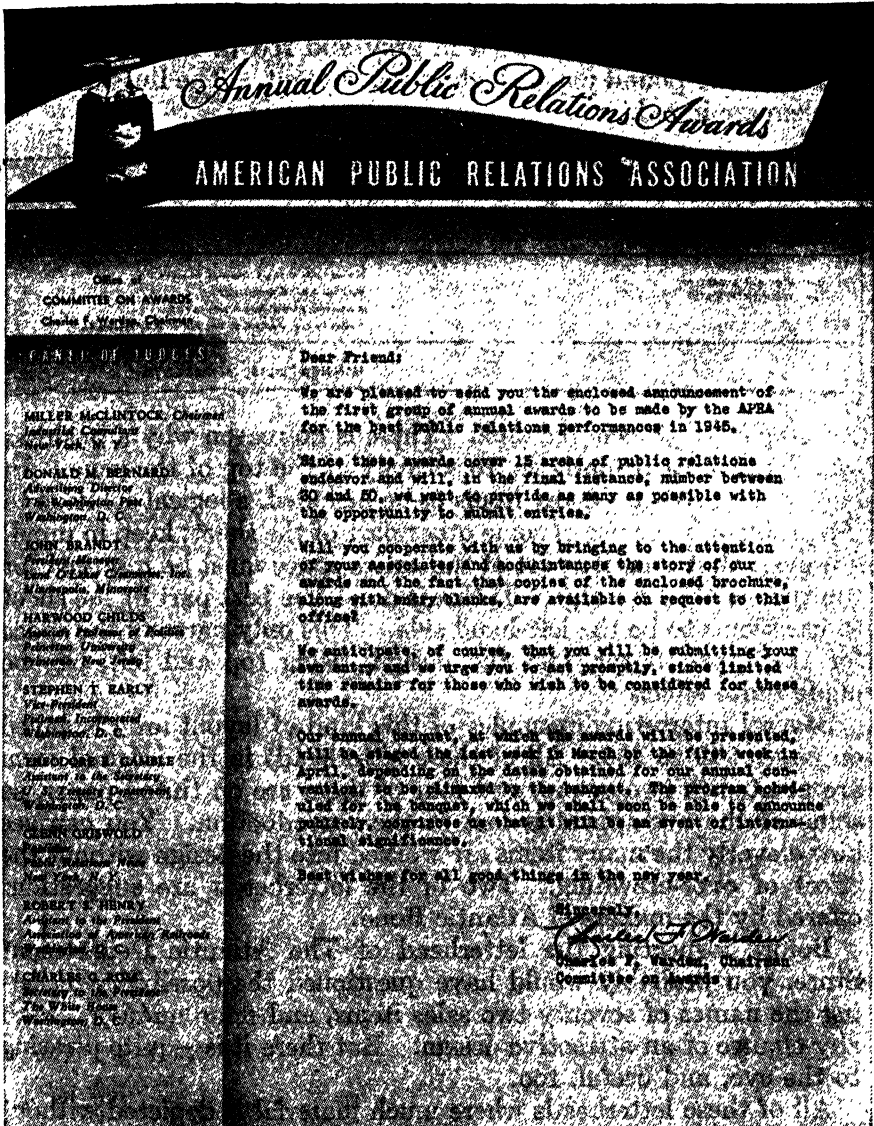
**BUY CHRISTMAS SEALS . . . DON'T FORGET "The House in the Valley"**  
Make Checks Payable to the WELFARE LEAGUE, M. T. S., CHICAGO

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## LETTERHEAD WITH HANDICAP OF MANY NAMES

No one could deny that putting such a mass of items on one page made an attractive letterhead almost impossible; remember, too that whoever did the job still had to leave some room for the typing of the letter. In view of these facts, we may be lenient in our criticism of the result. No matter how hard you might have tried, it is doubtful that you could have done any better.






ON THIS LETTERHEAD, THE PROBLEM OF MANY NAMES IS HANDLED VERY SKILLFULLY. THE BORDER AROUND THE PANEL (BLUE TO AGREE WITH BACKGROUND AT TOP) TENDS TO SET THE NAMES APART, AND THE BODY OF THE LETTER RETAINS A POSITION OF PROMINENCE.

As you would expect from professionals banded together, the letterhead used by the Advertising Club of Minneapolis is a fine example of how more than the usual number of factual and illustrative items can be assembled into a design which has both quality



appeal and a distinction derived from originality in treatment. This letterhead is also printed in gray and red (a favorite combination) on 24 pound paper, high in rag content. The lines and the emblem are in red.

	
<b>ADVERTISING CLUB OF MINNEAPOLIS</b> <i>Men Who Produce, Buy, or Sell Advertising</i>	
<small>OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY 224 SOUTH FIFTH STREET</small>	<small>President: FRANK SEWELL, Jr., Minneapolis Brewing Co. Vice President: RAY C. JOHNSON, ESQ. Vice President: J. STUART MOORE, Lumber and B Co. Secretary-Treasurer: WALTER C. STRANG, Northwestern Bell Telephone Co.</small>
<b>MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA</b>	

*Using other parts of the sheet.* There is no reason why a business letterhead must be designed to set only at the top of the page. In fact, when there are many items to be included, a logical solution to the problem is the use of some other part of the sheet; keep in mind, however, that a major part of the entire space must be reserved for the typewritten message. If this is done, the best part of the sheet to use seems to be the left-hand side. This only narrows the space for the typed letter, and the design, using top and left, can be made quite effective.

Several interesting examples of this kind of layout are displayed on pages 249 to 253. All of these letterheads in the original form are printed in two colors, and four of them are on tinted paper, so some of the eye-appeal is lost in the reproduction. You can see how cleverly the many items are worked into the design without the effect of over-crowding. Two of the letterheads are suggestions offered by the makers of Atlantic Bond.

Before inspecting the letterhead of The Atlantic Department Store, you probably would have questioned the possibility of listing the names of seventy-two sales items, and floor numbers, with any chance of an attractive design. But there it is—quite pleasing to the eye, and useful, too.

All of these letterheads where much material is depicted without confusion emphasize the fact that the designing of a good letterhead is a job for the expert commercial artist. We shudder to think what any of these would have been had they been left in the hands of amateurs.

*Four types of letterhead design.* Although in a book that seeks to survey all of the many aspects of business correspondence, we cannot stretch too far this discussion of letterheads, but it is well that you have as wide a view as possible of the factors that contribute to




**WELCOME  
BAKING  
COMPANY**

DEYO E. CRANE  
PRESIDENT AND MANAGER

TELEPHONES  
ILLINOIS EXCHANGE  
RI-656


DAVENPORT EXCHANGE  
2-1765

# Peter Pan



**BREAD AND CAKE**  
*MAKES TASTIER MEALS*

ROCKINGHAM ROAD AT ELMWOOD AVENUE  
DAVENPORT, IOWA



AMERICA'S MOST MODERN BAKERY

their utility and charm. With that background, you may then be encouraged to continue your study of a subject which will prove both fascinating and of practical value.

In general, you may place almost any business letterhead in one of four groups, if you omit such variables as quality of paper, use of color, etc., and think only of their structural form. The first of these types, and the simplest, is the one that may be compared to the shape of a *triangle*. If you drew lines from above the center of




the circle in the letterhead below, and connected them, the long line which runs from edge to edge would be a triangle (page 254).

In the earlier days, printers were fond of this triangular form because that could be the only way to attain balance and orderliness in type arrangement. In holding to this concept, they were severely cramping their style, and making it very hard to attain any original-

SHOPPING LIST AND STORE DIRECTORY	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CHECK ITEMS DESIRED
<input type="checkbox"/>	ACCESSORY SHOP
<input type="checkbox"/>	ART EMBROIDERY
<input type="checkbox"/>	AWINGS
<input type="checkbox"/>	BATTERIES
<input type="checkbox"/>	BEAUTY SHOP
<input type="checkbox"/>	BLANKETS
<input type="checkbox"/>	BLOUSES
<input type="checkbox"/>	BOOKS
<input type="checkbox"/>	BUDGET SHOP
<input type="checkbox"/>	CAMERAS
<input type="checkbox"/>	CAMP EQUIPMENT
<input type="checkbox"/>	CANDY
<input type="checkbox"/>	CHINA
<input type="checkbox"/>	CLOCKS
<input type="checkbox"/>	COATS
<input type="checkbox"/>	COSMETICS
<input type="checkbox"/>	COTTON SHOP
<input type="checkbox"/>	CURTAINS
<input type="checkbox"/>	DEBUTANTE SHOP
<input type="checkbox"/>	DRESSES
<input type="checkbox"/>	DRUGS
<input type="checkbox"/>	ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES
<input type="checkbox"/>	EVENING WEAR
<input type="checkbox"/>	FABRICS
<input type="checkbox"/>	FURNITURE
<input type="checkbox"/>	FURS
<input type="checkbox"/>	GARDEN SUPPLIES
<input type="checkbox"/>	GLOVES
<input type="checkbox"/>	GROCERIES
<input type="checkbox"/>	HANDBAGS
<input type="checkbox"/>	HARDWARE
<input type="checkbox"/>	HOUSEWARES
<input type="checkbox"/>	INFANTS' WEAR
<input type="checkbox"/>	JACETS
<input type="checkbox"/>	JEWELRY
<input type="checkbox"/>	KNITWEAR
<input type="checkbox"/>	LACES
<input type="checkbox"/>	LAMPS
<input type="checkbox"/>	LINEES
<input type="checkbox"/>	LINOLEUMS
<input type="checkbox"/>	LUGGAGE
<input type="checkbox"/>	MEN'S FURNISHINGS
<input type="checkbox"/>	MILLINERY
<input type="checkbox"/>	NECWEAR
<input type="checkbox"/>	RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/>	NOTIONS
<input type="checkbox"/>	ORIENTAL SHOP
<input type="checkbox"/>	PAINTS
<input type="checkbox"/>	PATTERNS
<input type="checkbox"/>	PHOTO SUPPLIES
<input type="checkbox"/>	PICTURES
<input type="checkbox"/>	RADIOS
<input type="checkbox"/>	RESTAURANT
<input type="checkbox"/>	RIBBONS
<input type="checkbox"/>	RIDING SHOP
<input type="checkbox"/>	RUGS
<input type="checkbox"/>	SEASIDE SHOP
<input type="checkbox"/>	SHOES
<input type="checkbox"/>	SKETCHES
<input type="checkbox"/>	SILVERWARE
<input type="checkbox"/>	SUNTS
<input type="checkbox"/>	SMOKING EQUIPMENT
<input type="checkbox"/>	SPORTWEAR
<input type="checkbox"/>	STATIONERY
<input type="checkbox"/>	STOCKINGS
<input type="checkbox"/>	SUITS
<input type="checkbox"/>	TAPESTRIES
<input type="checkbox"/>	TELESCOPES
<input type="checkbox"/>	TOYS
<input type="checkbox"/>	TROUSSEAU SHOP
<input type="checkbox"/>	TYPEWRITERS
<input type="checkbox"/>	UMBRELLAS

## THE *Atlantic* DEPARTMENT STORE

Philadelphia, Penn.





ity of treatment that might have favorable eye-appeal. Nevertheless, that was the way they worked, and it helps to explain why many of the early letterheads were like so many peas in the pod. Of course, the triangle could be in reverse to the one just illustrated, with the point at the bottom instead of the top. This is the form taken by the Studebaker letterhead, page 254.

It is no reflection on the design of this letterhead that it should be

**LANDSCAPE SERVICE**

GENERAL PLANTING  
LAWN CULTIVATION  
FLOWER GARDENS  
ROCK TERRACES  
GARDEN POOLS  
ROCKERIES  
▲

TREE MOVING  
▲

TREE SURGERY  
TRIMMING  
SPRAYING  
FEEDING  
▲

GATEWAYS  
FENCES  
DRIVES  
WALLS  
WALKS  
▲

SWIMMING POOLS  
SUMMER HOUSES  
TENNIS COURTS  
PERGOLAS  
▲

LANDSCAPE  
MAINTENANCE

*Peter Cassinelli*

---

MEMBER THE CINCINNATI LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION AND THE GREATER CINCINNATI NURSERYMEN'S ASSOCIATION  
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**ALL VARIETIES OF  
LOCALLY ADAPTED  
NURSERY MATERIAL  
GROWING IN . . . .  
CASSINELLI'S OWN**

*Glendale Nurseries*

ON THE PRINCETON PIKE • Telephone • PRinceton 7763

INSIDE BORDER LINES HELP TO AVOID CROWDING

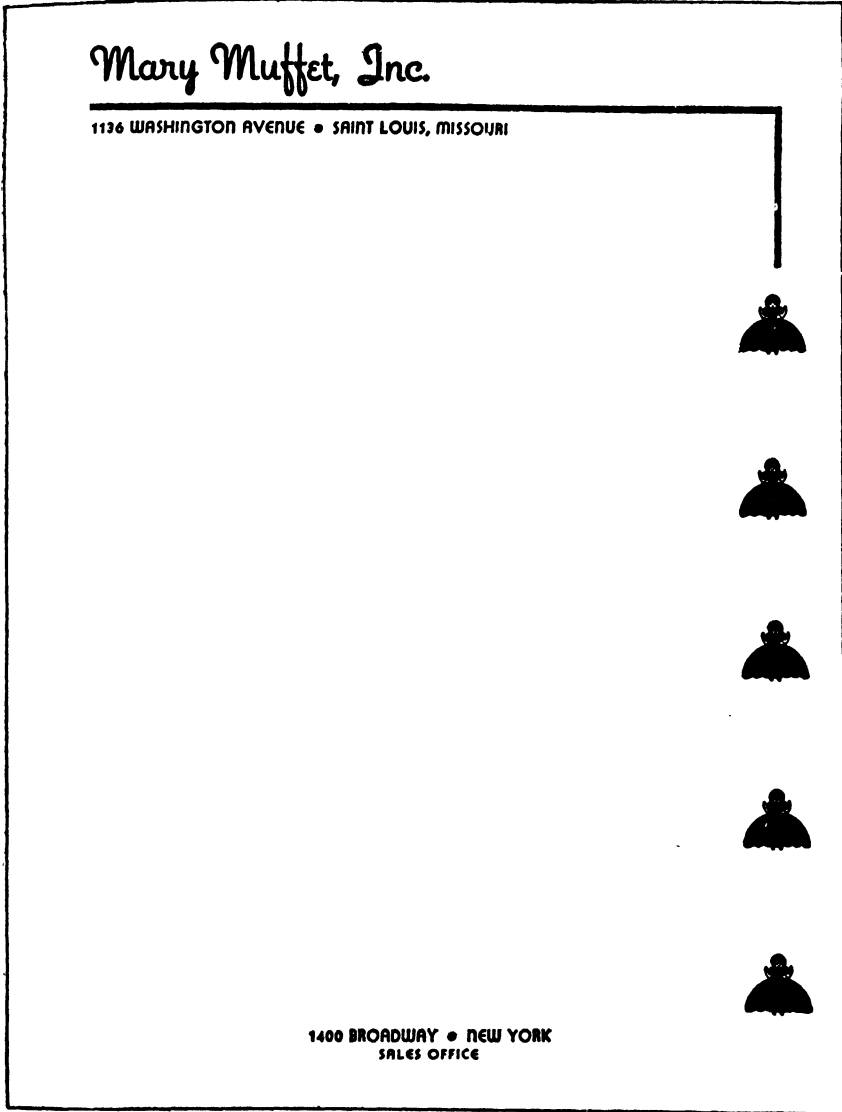


<p>• MEN'S FURNISHINGS</p> 	<p><i>To</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>From</i> <b>THE MENS SHOP</b> 1486 SPRING STREET • NEW YORK</p>
<p>HATS • COATS • GLOVES • BELTS • UNDERWEAR • COLIARS • SHIRTS • NECKWEAR • SCARFS • SPATS</p>	<p>PRINTED IN RED AND BLACK ON A CREAM SHADE OF ATLANTIC ANTIQUE LAID PAPER, SUBSTANCE 24, THIS LETTERHEAD HAS PLENTY OF GLAMOUR, PLUS A SPECIAL UTILITY VALUE.</p> <p>BY RESERVING A SPACE ABOVE THE NAME PANEL FOR THE ADDRESS AND SALUTATION, THE DIFFICULTY OF MATCHING MULTIGRAPHED COPY WITH THE TYPING IS AVOIDED. ANY SMALL DIFFERENCE WOULD NOT BE NEARLY AS NOTICEABLE AS IN THE ORDINARY LETTER WHERE THE "FILL-IN" COMES RIGHT ABOVE THE MULTIGRAPHED PART.</p> <p>MOREOVER, THE <i>To</i> AND <i>From</i> GIVE THE LETTERHEAD A PERSONAL TOUCH QUITE APPROPRIATE FOR A SHOP SERVING A SELECTED CLIENTELE OF MEN BUYERS.</p>

placed in the triangle classification. With the emblem printed in bright red and the words embossed in a very deep and lustrous black, the effect is quite attractive.

The second of the four types is somewhat more flexible, although the items displayed are still centered with respect to each other and to position on the page. When you draw an imaginary line to follow the contour of the design, the resulting form is that of a *rase*.





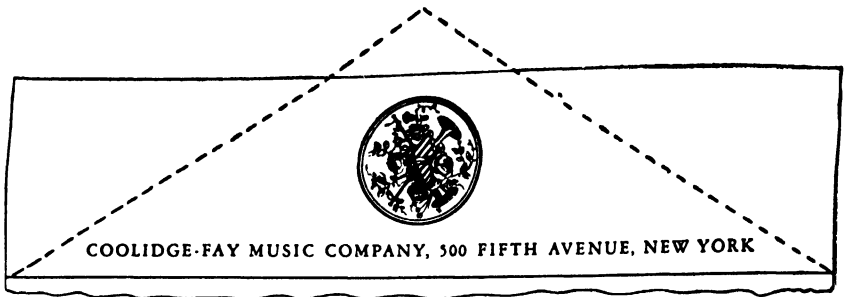
AN ATTRACTIVE DESIGN

Many, many business letterheads are of the “vase” variety—like the one shown on page 254.

A touch that helps give life to the vase letterhead is that the upper “Wisconsin” appears in badger red, which contrasts pleasantly with the other black letters and the sheer white of the paper. The whole of the design is engraved.

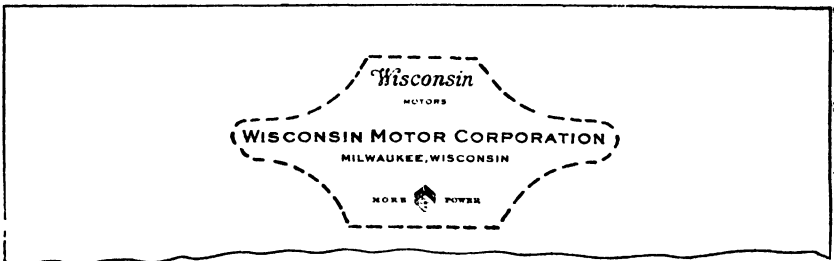
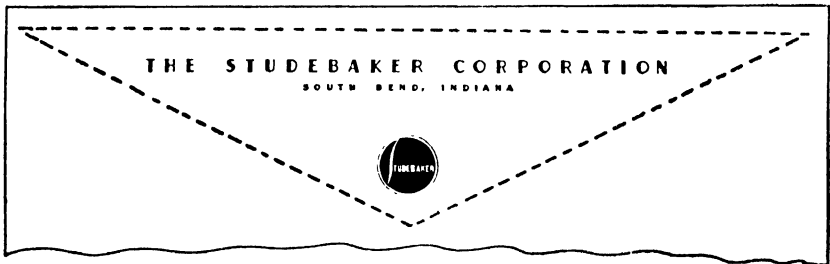
The third type of letterhead departs considerably from the





picture-on-the-wall effect of the *triangle* and the *vase*. The panel design runs across the page like the *frieze* on the wall of a room or building. This form has many interesting possibilities, which the modern designers have been quick to recognize. Some letterheads of the frieze classification are extremely simple, and yet very pleasing to the eye. In the original (bottom this page) the word "Advertising" is printed in green—the rest in black.

The fourth class of letterheads is by far the most interesting, and yet the most difficult to tag with a word. Perhaps, as defined in the dictionary, "*Symmetry*" is as close as any other. According to





Webster, "Symmetry is a due proportion of the several parts of a body to each other; harmonious relation of parts." Hence, a letterhead of this type does not attain balance by regularity of type, or by the centering of illustrative material on the page, but instead by "*harmonious relation*" in which blank space is as important as the printed parts. In the example below, the illustration is one-quarter inch closer to the left side of the paper than to the right, and the one word, "CHICAGO," commands one third of the entire space, the other two thirds being pretty much filled with copy and illustration. Yet, the entire ensemble does not seem out of balance, there being as Webster made obligatory, "a due proportion of the several parts of the body to each other."

LLOYD  
LABORATORIES

934 WEST VAN BUREN ST



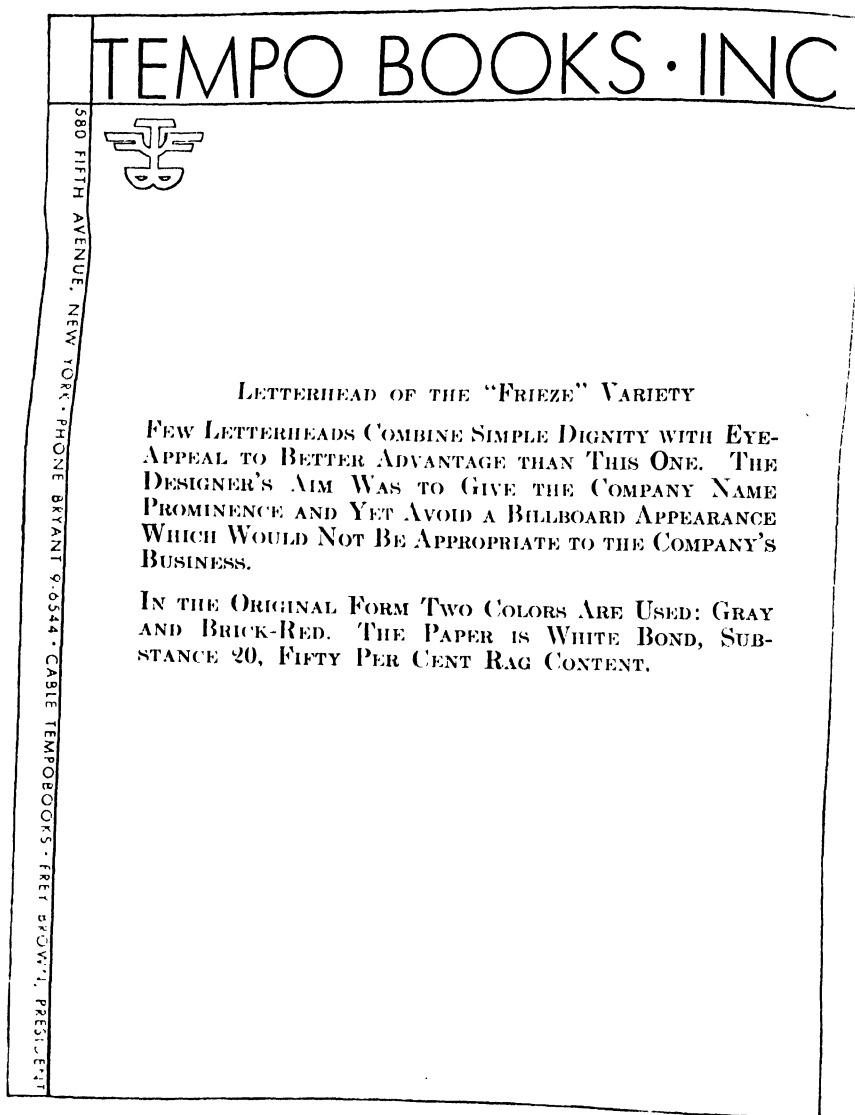
*Instruments of Precision; Nautical, Aeronautical  
Optical, Scientific and Commercial Glass Products*

CHICAGO

A great many of the letterheads displayed in this Handbook are interesting and suggestive examples of *symmetry* in design. On some of them, in their original form, color helps to achieve "harmonious relation of parts," by giving emphasis to a certain item in the layout which might otherwise seem to lack proportion. Even in these one-color reproductions, there is adequate proof that the parts of a letterhead may be put together without the old conception of regularity, and still be extremely pleasing to the eye.

However, we again need to remind ourselves that both skill and artistic sense are required to plan and execute a good design. This is a highly specialized, *creative* job, and not all are qualified for it. Some letterheads of the more modern type are obviously turned out by amateurs, and are painful to behold. If a business executive wanted an oil-painting of his wife, he would seek the services of a trained artist of established reputation. The same principle applies to the creation of letterheads in the third and fourth classes. It is far wiser to use one of the simpler forms—the *triangle* or the

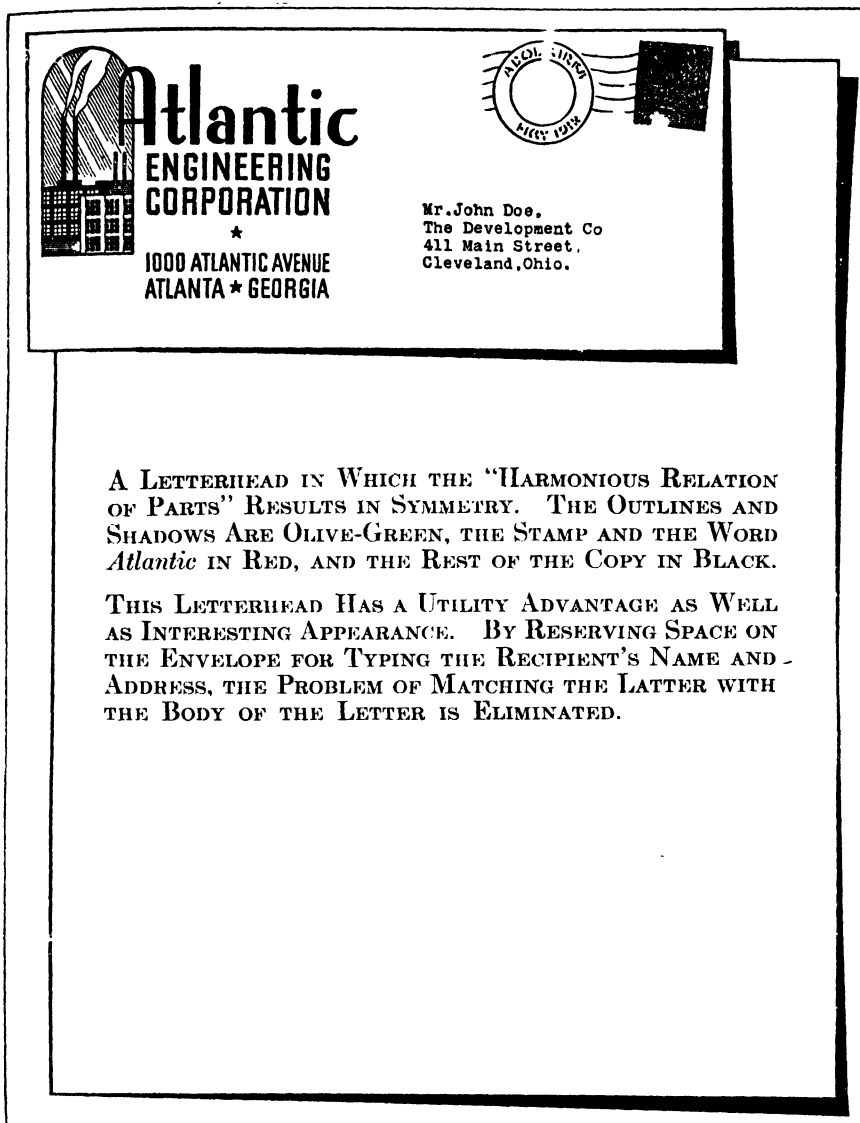




case when a competent typographer is available, than to try for something more spectacular and make a botch of the job.

*Letterheads symbolic of the business.* Remember the influence of letter-contacts on sales; there is much to be said in favor of the letterhead which highlights the nature of the company, its products, or services. In a very attractive fashion, the letterhead on page 260 includes a map of the territory served by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company. Incidentally, the message on this





A LETTERHEAD IN WHICH THE "HARMONIOUS RELATION OF PARTS" RESULTS IN SYMMETRY. THE OUTLINES AND SHADOWS ARE OLIVE-GREEN, THE STAMP AND THE WORD *Atlantic* IN RED, AND THE REST OF THE COPY IN BLACK.

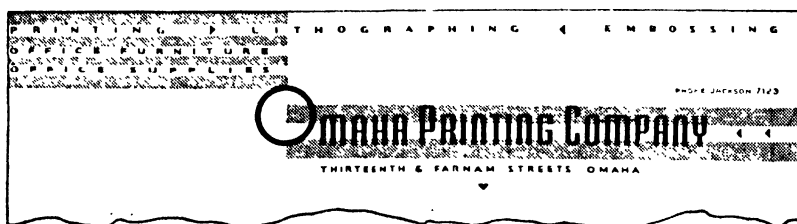
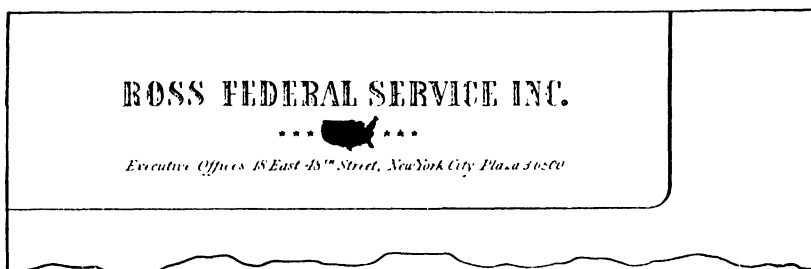
THIS LETTERHEAD HAS A UTILITY ADVANTAGE AS WELL AS INTERESTING APPEARANCE. BY RESERVING SPACE ON THE ENVELOPE FOR TYPING THE RECIPIENT'S NAME AND ADDRESS, THE PROBLEM OF MATCHING THE LATTER WITH THE BODY OF THE LETTER IS ELIMINATED.

fine letterhead shows how a small incident in the life of an organization can be used to express customer-appreciation, and thus promote friendly public relations.

Another good railroad letterhead is that on page 261. Here, the illustration of the train symbolizes the services of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad as a freight carrier. The letterhead does a sales job by reminding every recipient what this railroad is ready to do for him. In the same way, the big truck catches immediate



attention on the letterhead of the Wisconsin Ice and Coal Co. By this illustration, any reader in Milwaukee might be reminded to order his winter supply of coal. The letterhead of the Glider Trailer Company stimulates desire for that kind of travel by depicting a trailer rolling across the highway; the beautiful scenery reminds the reader of the fun he and his family might have if they possessed one of these vehicles.



#### LETTERHEADS THAT EXPRESS HARMONIOUS PROPORTION

The four "black and whites" on page 262 are designed for use by "Dude" Ranches, and distributed as a goodwill gesture by H. J. Justin & Sons, famous makers of cowboy boots and shoes. With or without imprint, each of these four letterheads reveals a phase of life on a ranch, and thus by the power of illustration alone, the reader's thirst for vacation on a "Dude" Ranch is sharpened. There is a very old saying attributed to the Chinese that "One pic-



ture is worth a thousand words." Certainly pictures have great power in letterhead design.

*Illustrating the building.* There seems to be no reason for using the picture of a building on a business letterhead, unless there is something special or unusual about it to win favor. Banks, hotels, insurance companies, may be partially judged by the places in which they are serving the public, but if a building is only commonplace, a



**BEVERLEY  
TAXPAYERS' ASSOCIATION**

*Office of the Secretary*

*31 Gifford Street* **BEVERLEY**

### THREE MORE LETTERHEADS IN THE MODERN STYLE

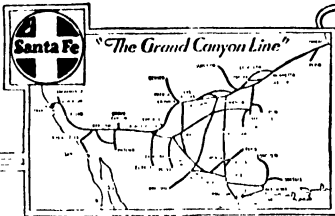
picture could do little more than please the vanity of tenant or owner.

Besides, it is difficult to blend a picture of any size into the design of a letterhead without letting it dominate the other items on the page. This was intended in designing the three letterheads reproduced on page 264. The pictures are so impressive that they deserved to rate higher than anything else that might have been



included. You know that this thought was held by the creator of the letterheads, because the other items are reduced to a minimum. The pictures were allowed to carry the load, and they do it very well.

For example, the picture of the Vinoy Park Hotel in St. Petersburg speaks eloquently for the quality (and perhaps, expense) of its services; the picture of the building used by the Northern Trust company reflects a substantial strength which people expect of a bank where they put their money; and the huge plant of the John



WM. A. FLEMING, General Agent, Pass. Dept.  
C. E. GRAHAM, Division Passenger Agent  
H. R. LANDIS, City Ticket Agent  
R. H. BULSTON, City Passenger Agent  
G. T. TALBOT, City Passenger Agent  
MICHAEL HUGHES, Training Passenger Agent  
M. O. STROM, Training Passenger Agent

## The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company

179 W. Jackson Boulevard, Chicago 4, Illinois  
Tel. HARRison 4900  
CITY TICKET OFFICE

April 5, 1946

FILE: 75

Mr. C. L. Sullivan  
Superintendent  
Customers Department  
Peoples Gas Light and Coke Company  
122 South Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois

Thank you very much for your letter of April 4th enclosing check for \$8.72 covering dinner and refreshments served to Mr. and Mrs. Albert L. Tossell and Mrs. Mary Bruer on Santa Fe train #13 "The Chief" from Chicago, March 7th, 1946.

Expressions contained in your letter are sincerely appreciated and Mr. M. O. Strom of this office has been given an opportunity to read your letter.

All of us with the Santa Fe hope we may have the opportunity of serving your Company and your people frequently and continually.

*W. A. Fleming*  
General Agent, Passenger Dept.

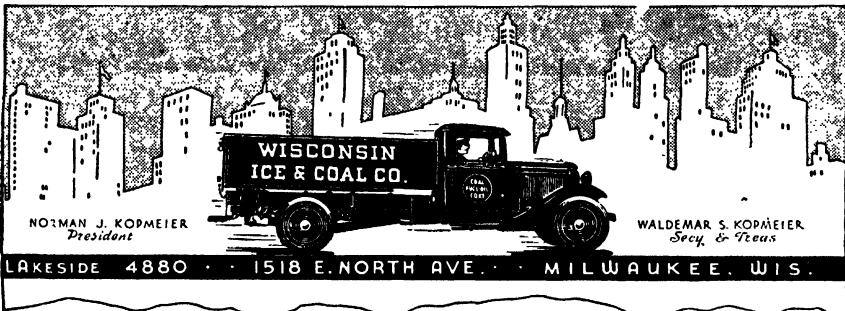
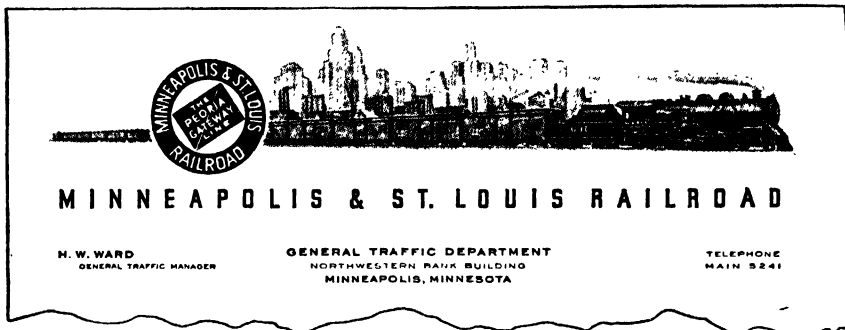
WAF:emj



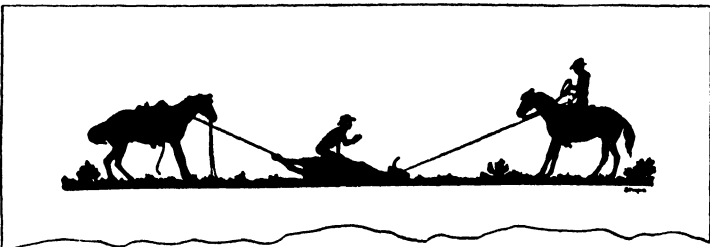
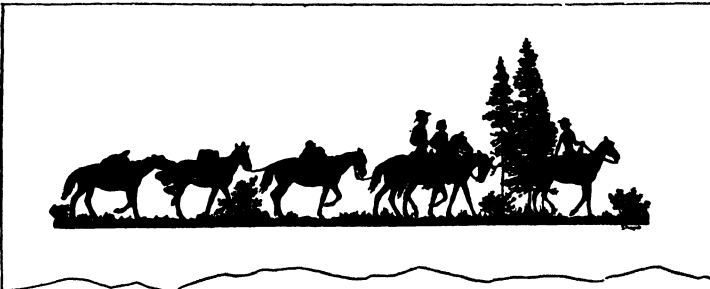
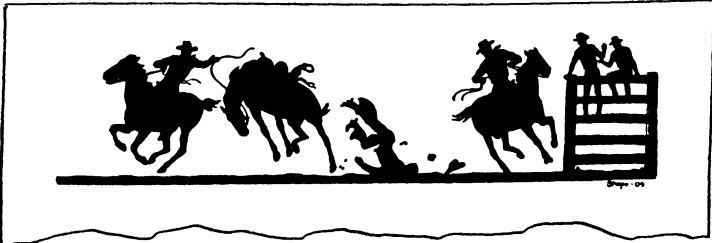
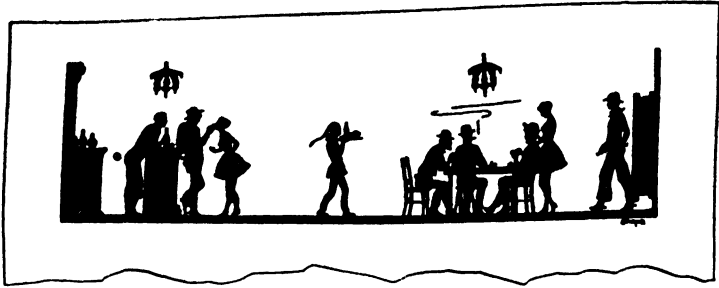
B. Stetson Company says plainly enough, "We must make fine hats else why would the demand for them cause us to grow so big?"

In connection with the use of a building on a letterhead, one kind of chiseling deserves severe condemnation. Sometimes a beautiful or massive structure is pictured, with the implication that it belongs or is used by the company, when in reality only a small unit of the property is occupied. This is downright cheating, because the users of the letterhead seek credit for prestige and magnitude which are not genuine.

The percentage of business letterheads carrying pictures of plants and office buildings is not large. In general, we think it could be





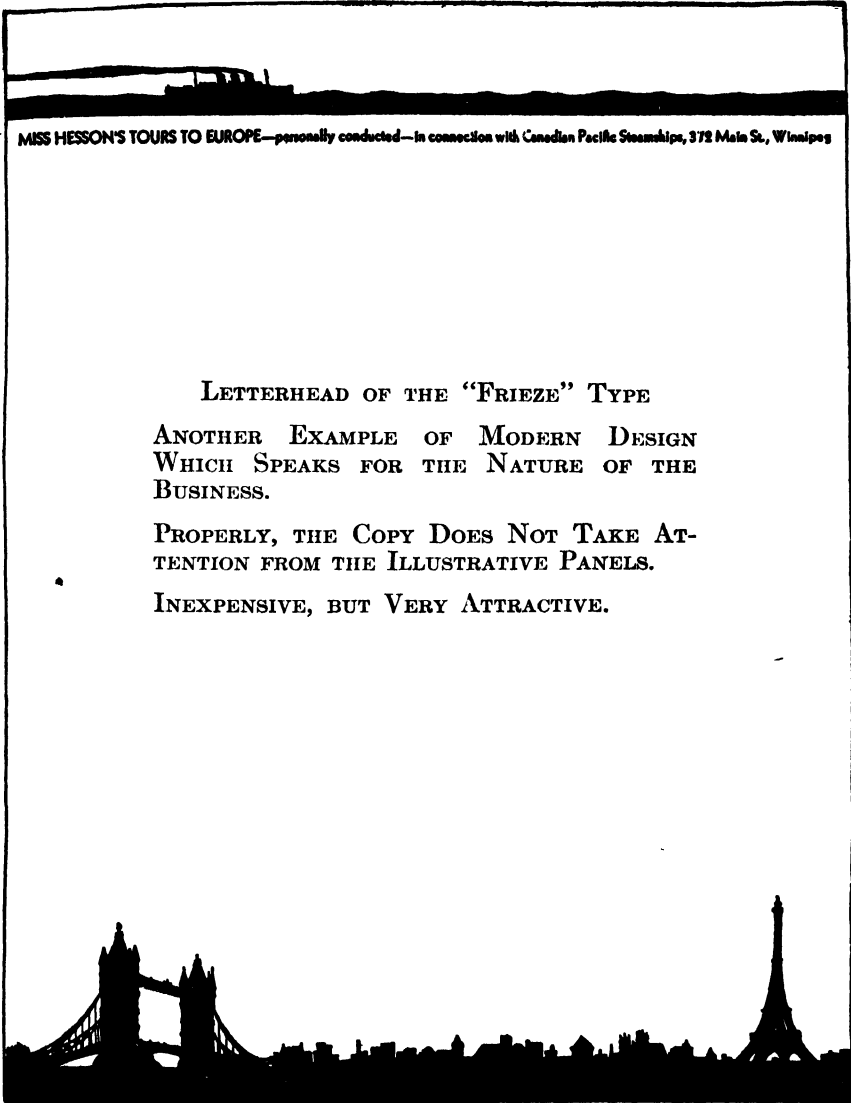


FOUR LETTERHEAD DESIGNS FOR DUDE RANCHES

reduced still lower without any great loss as there are other possibilities much more interesting.

*Use of trade-marks.* A very understandable feature in the design of many letterheads is the company trade-mark, slogan, or trade-name. In some cases, it is a combination of two or all of them. A company of long standing has every right to prize highly any means by which it is recognized and remembered by the buying

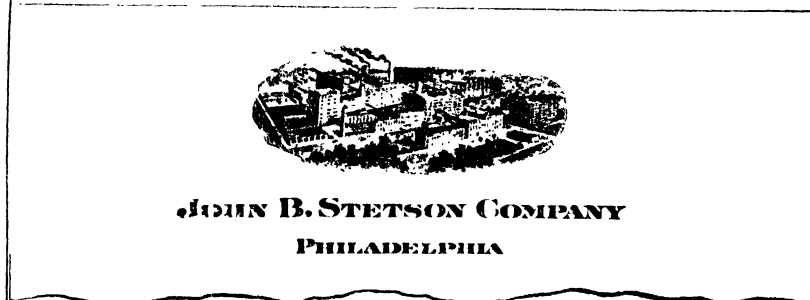
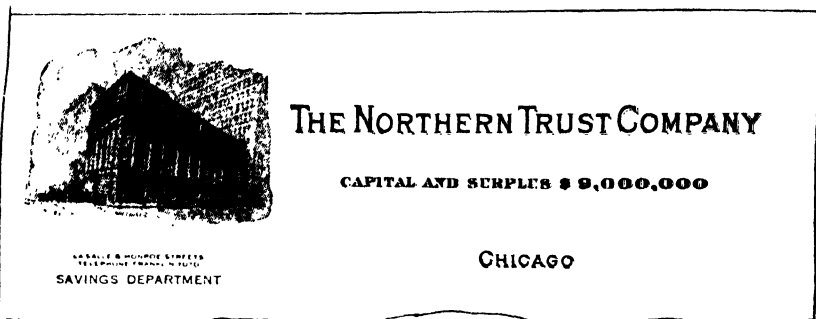




public. Hence, if the identification device is clever and quite different from anything used by competitors, a determined effort is made to keep it alive and “kicking”—by using it on the package, on delivery wagons and trucks, in all kinds of advertising, and of course, on the company stationery.

Trade-marks, especially, are easily adaptable to letterhead design, the exceptions being those which are so ugly and uninteresting that they detract rather than add to the general appearance.



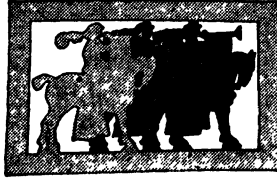


#### LETTERHEADS THAT SPOTLIGHT THE BUILDING

A very good one is that used for many years by Hart Schaffner & Marx. The reproduction on page 265 does not do it justice as the heralds on horseback are processed in three colors, gray, red, and blue. People the world over know this insignia and the company for which it stands; naturally, it deserves to be featured in the letterhead.

Trade-marks that picture a product are particularly valuable, since they do a double job; they help both to keep the product selling and the maker's name alive in the public consciousness. Three





ARTHUR FRANK  
SALT LAKE CITY UTAH

September 4, 1936

Mrs. Ethel M. Ramey,  
1370 Butler Avenue,  
City.

Dear Mrs. Ramey:

Clothes present a far different problem to you girls who come down town to business six days a week.

You want exclusive, individual fashions that preserve your business demeanor - and that radiate charm, ease, and style. Tailoring that stands up under stress of wear, and prices within the ken of a cautious budget.

You'll love the new coats and suits - a few of them sketched in the enclosed small folder. They really have "everything" a business girl could desire.

And you may purchase them, or any of our smart attractive new tailored and semi-tailored dresses, on our liberal credit plan.

To be prepared to slip into a smart new fall outfit the first cool days means a lot. Of course, you know the smartest styles arrive early.

We hope you will let us show you these lovely new fall styles ..... soon.

Very truly,

★ HARTSCHAFNER & MARY CLOUTIER ★

good samples are those on page 266. A possible objection to the letterhead belonging to the Harley-Davidson Motor Company is that while the picture of the motorcycle is pleasing, that of the rider in uniform may in some people arouse unpleasant memories. In a similar way, the man who buys a "Romany Ring" for his lady-love might live to regret it. The objection is far-fetched—you may forget it!

The insignie representing United Air Lines adds a lively touch to




their letterhead (page 267) and must have been a help rather than a hindrance to the designer. So also may one interpret the use of the Cadillac emblem, which since the early days of the automobile industry has stood for quality in motor cars. The use of the trade-mark for the Grand Rapids Store Equipment Co. no doubt presented more of a problem, for it is not easy to incorporate two initials into a letterhead design. However, the effort was well worthwhile, because the result is a rather striking layout, attractive and sure to be remembered. The nature of the business does not always justify a spotlight on the trade-mark, however. For example,



**STERN & STERN, Inc.**  
ESTABLISHED 1904  
RING MAKERS AND MANUFACTURING JEWELERS

SOLE MANUFACTURERS OF  
*Pat Reversible Top*  
**Romany Rings**  
TRADE MARK

216 East 45th Street  
NEW YORK, N. Y.  
TELEPHONES  
VANDERBILT 3-5455 5546



**PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISION**

**HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR COMPANY**

MILWAUKEE  
WISCONSIN



**The C. H. BROWN COMPANY**  
ESTABLISHED 1888

*Cleaners of*  
**RUGS AND CARPETS**

CHARLES H. BROWN, JR.  
PRESIDENT  
JAMES H. BROWN, JR.  
VICE-PRESIDENT  
D. C. BROWN, JR.  
TREASURER

1400  
MURRAY HILL 6-5800

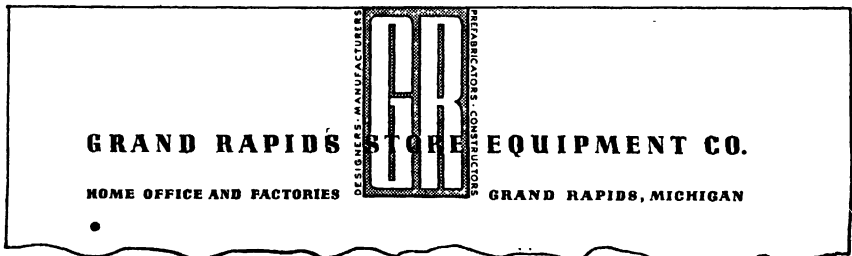
REUPHOLSTERING  
DYEING  
REPAIRING  
ALTERATIONS  
RELAYING  
MATH PROOFING  
FINE PRICED STORAGE

OUR CLEANERS INSTITUTE  
OF AMERICA

308-13 EAST 45th ST New York



the trade-marks of the Inland Rubber Corporation and Imperial Furniture Company, page 268, are subordinated to copy and do little more than add a certain ornamental effect. This is not a criticism of these letterheads, as they are both good in design, and no doubt the executives responsible did not want the trade-marks to play major parts.



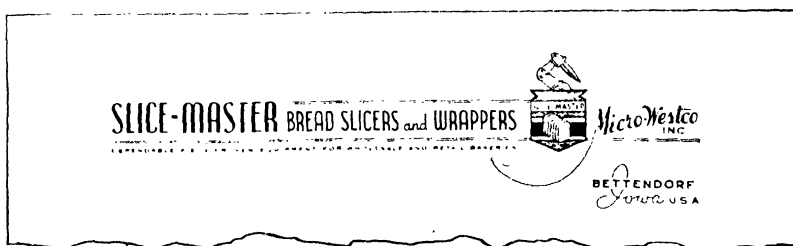
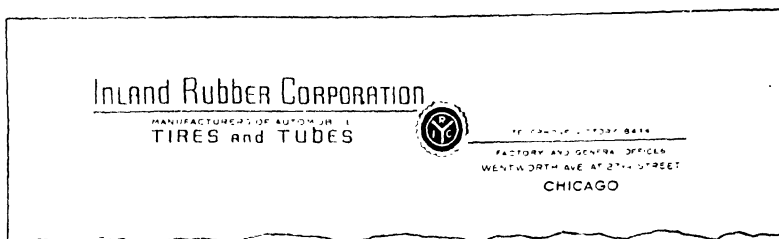
#### LETTERHEADS THAT SPOTLIGHT THE TRADEMARK

Extremely colorful and interesting are the letterheads used by Maag & Porter, and the Iowa Feed Company, page 269. The former, used by a firm that specializes in commercial art, is to be expected, but ordinarily we do not see anything as ultra-modern representing a feed company. The originals both make lavish use of color. Red in each case predominates, as it does in so many of the other letterheads on parade in this survey. Perhaps, we are



safe in saying that red rates first in popularity when the designers wish to add a dash of glamour.

The trade-mark on the letterhead of the Mills Novelty Co., page 270, is the figure of a little man (orange and blue) about to indulge in a heaping spoonful of what may be assumed to be very tasty ice-cream. At least, the little man is smiling, and has one hand on his stomach, as if he may have been gorging for some time. This is indeed a delightful letterhead, and the designer, whoever he may have been, deserves our praise.



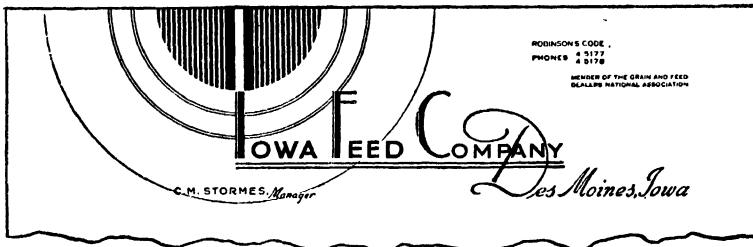
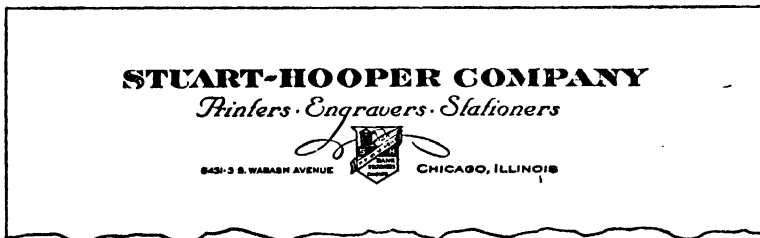
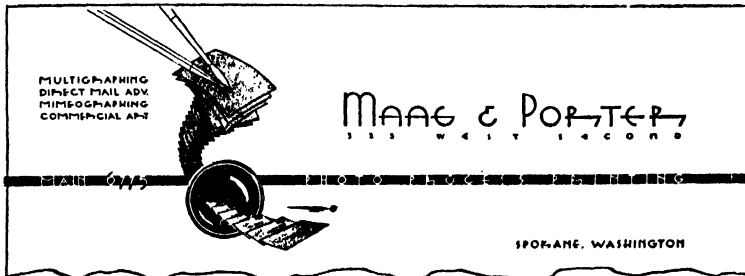
#### LETTERHEADS WITH TRADEMARK SUBORDINATED

*Executive letterheads.* The most dignified, and sometimes the least interesting, of all letterheads used in the business world, are those prepared for the personal use of top executives. Often, they are engraved on paper of exceptional quality, and the size of the sheet is smaller than standard 8½ by 11 inches. Why high station demands so much formality is hard to explain, except that custom makes it so. Unfortunately, plus the coldness of the letterhead,



there is now and then a similarity in language, so that the contact with the reader is not as warm and human as the writer probably wants it to be.

This charge is not filed against *all* business executives, because many prefer to use the regular company stationery with the addition of their name and title. In a later section of this Handbook, you will inspect representative executive letters, and many of them will please you by their naturalness and warmth.



### PROMINENT DISPLAY OF TRADEMARKS

The letterheads on page 271 are typical of the executive type. Their chief characteristic is simplicity, attained by black engraved copy on pure white paper of heavy substance and high rag content. Although they lack the attention value of many of the more colorful commercial letterheads, they do possess a dignity which must impress the reader.

*Bulletin Board Letterhead.* The reproduction on page 272 is of a letterhead suitable for company messages within the "family"—





**MILLS SUPER-CREAMED ICE CREAM FREEZER**  
**MILLS NOVELTY CO., 4100 FULLERTON AVE., CHICAGO**

**BELIEVE IT OR NOT\*—**

Alaska Eskimos each eat 3 gallons of  
ice cream a year --

Temperatures of 20 below zero can be  
found in Florida in July --

Ice cream can be drawn from a tap  
like soda water --

A contrivance has been invented which  
turns 2 1/2 gallons of liquid into 5 full  
gallons in 10 minutes --

Many owners and nearly all the public, amazed at what the Mills  
Freezer can do, call it a "mechanical miracle."

As a matter of fact, it's simply a good idea, which saves use-  
less expense, and does a good turn for both merchant and consumer. But  
people will talk -- and, naturally, the Mills Freezer becomes a permanent  
advertiser for its owners. People like a progressive merchant -- and they  
always judge you by your equipment. Nothing is newer in ice cream mer-  
chandising than the remarkable Mills Freezer.

May we send you a sample of the tricky little ice cream carton  
which is supplied to Mills customers? The package looks "nice enough to  
eat" and it would surely make a big hit in your neighborhood with your  
name printed on it.

Please let us hear from you.

Sincerely,

MILLS NOVELTY COMPANY

ICR:FIA

Refrigeration Sales Department

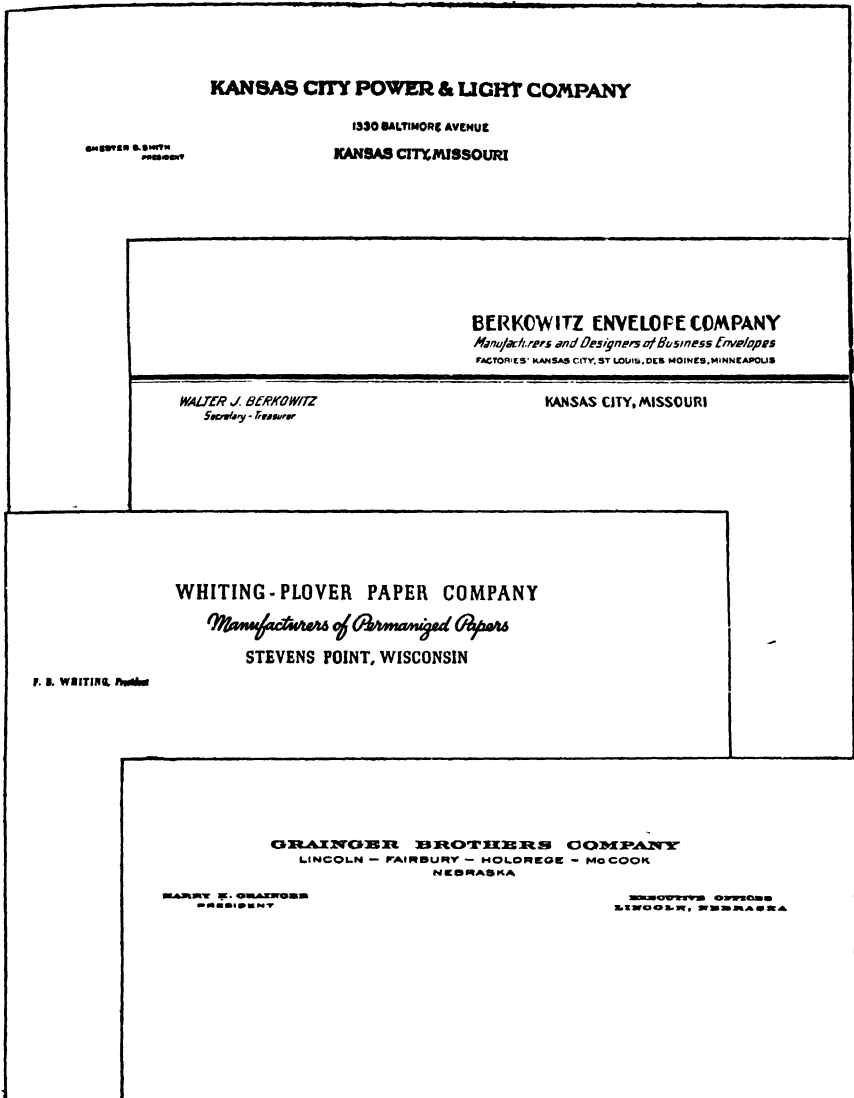
\*P.S. (a) Per capita consumption for U. S. and territories. (b) Interi-  
ors of Mills Hardening Cabinets. (c and d) THE MILLS FREEZER.

**A DELIGHTFUL LETTERHEAD**

to employees, salesmen, or dealers. It is printed on buff Atlantic  
Bond, and the colors are green and brown. Bulletins displayed in  
such a fashion are likely to win more attention than if just processed  
on sheets of blank paper: at least, that is a reasonable assumption.

Included in this class of letterheads are those designed for use in  
sales contexts, like the one titled "Step Out," on page 273. It is



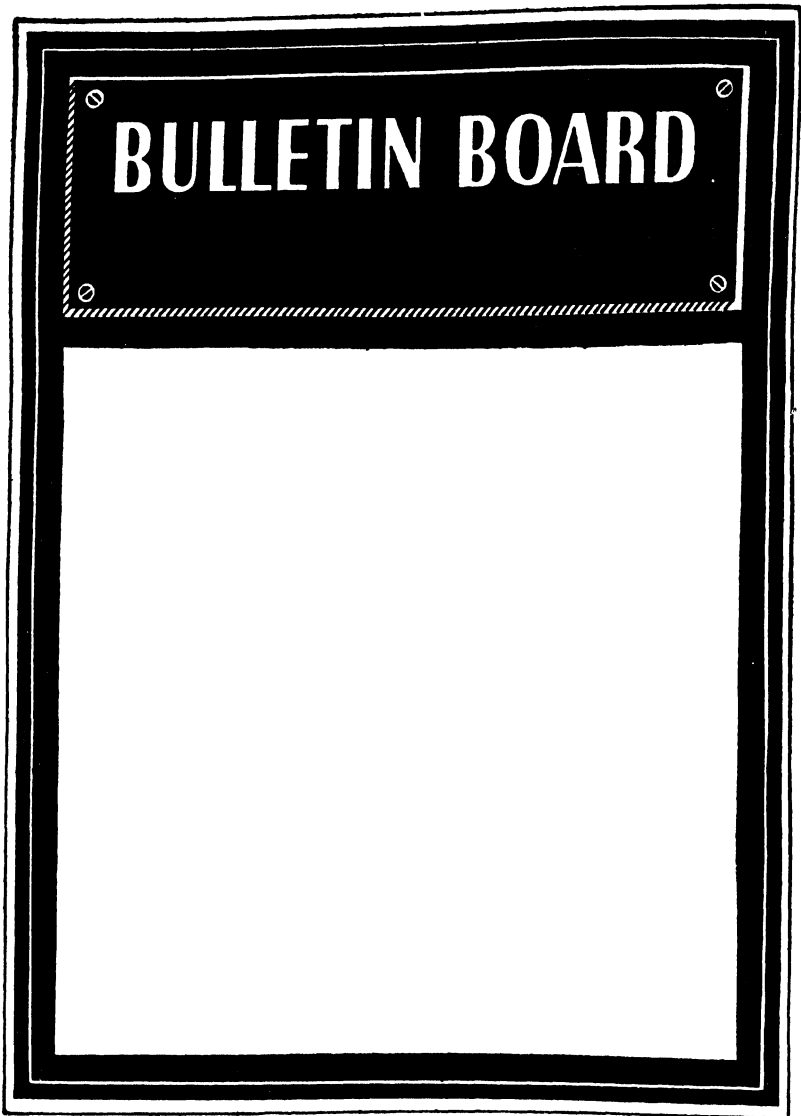


EXECUTIVE LETTERHEADS

one of the many prepared for clients by the Dartnell Corporation. You will see more of these special letterheads for salesmen in Section 13, Salesmanager Letters.

*Paper mills a source of information.* Many of the best letterhead ideas have originated in the paper mills. They employ only outstanding designers, and now and then offer to their clients port-





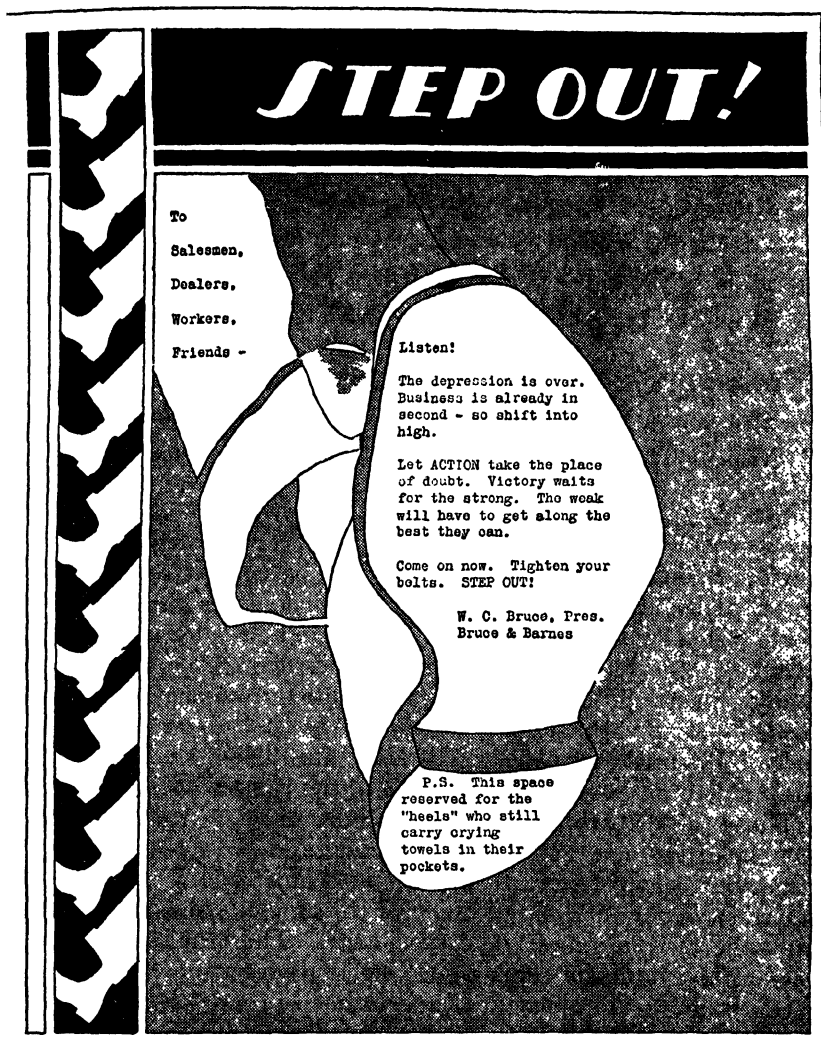
folios which include selected letterheads now in use, and suggested layouts for new ones. A contact with any of the following manufacturers should produce information and samples helpful in planning your own stationery.

Aetna Paper Company, Dayton, Ohio.

Appleton Coated Paper Company, Appleton, Wisconsin.

American Writing Paper Company, Holyoke, Massachusetts.





A Dartnell Presentation

L. L. Brown Paper Company, Adams, Massachusetts.

Champion Coated Paper Company, Hamilton, Ohio.

Crocker-McElwain Company, Holyoke, Massachusetts.

Eastern Manufacturing Company, 230 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Fox River Paper Company, Appleton, Wisconsin.



Gilbert Paper Company, Menasha, Wisconsin.

W. C. Hamilton & Sons, Miquon, Pennsylvania.

Hammermill Paper Company, Erie, Pennsylvania.

Hollingsworth and Whitney Company, 140 Federal Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

Howard Paper Company, Urbana, Ohio.

Lee Paper Company, Vicksburg, Michigan.

Millers Falls Paper Company, Millers Falls, Massachusetts.

Munising Paper Company, 410 Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Neenah Paper Company, Neenah, Wisconsin.

Strathmore Paper Company, West Springfield, Massachusetts.

Whiting-Plover Paper Company, Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

#### *4. Appearance of the Typed Letter*

*More variable than the letterhead.* The best of letterheads on the finest paper cannot be held entirely responsible for first impressions. It is everything on the page that the reader sees, and each part has something to say about whether or not the whole appearance is pleasing. Helping to contribute are such factors as the "touch" of the typist, the position of the letter on the page, the lack of erasures and smears, the form into which the various parts are molded, and even the condition of the ribbon and typewriter.

These factors are, of course, far more variable than that of the letterhead. Once the latter is designed and processed, it stays the same, but a typist may turn out one beautiful letter, and then an ugly one, depending on her mood of the moment and how faithfully she adheres to a standard of excellence. The attitude, too, of the person for whom the typist works helps to determine whether all of her letters are to appear neat and in good proportion, for it is true that most people perform only as *expected*, and seldom any better.

Frankly, a survey of the mechanical features that contribute to the appearance of a business letter cannot possibly be as interesting as some of the other aspects of letter carpentry, but they are all important, and should be understood if a high level of quality is to be attained. A dictator must know what he wants his letters to look like, what will help and what will not, before he can properly instruct the secretary or transcriber. Moreover, he must keep quality-conscious every day, for the moment his zeal falters, the level of performance is apt to sink.



*Importance of the typist.* As you know, among the several persons who contribute to the success of a business letter, the typist has the last word. Since almost all typists are women, this fact is not inappropriate, as they are accustomed to having it anyway. Be that as it may, the cycle is quite clear. The advertising manager usually goes to bat first. He plans the letterhead and selects the paper. Next, an artist makes the layout, the president approves the design, a printer does the processing, and finally the dictator spills his thoughts into a little tube or directly across the table into the notebook of his stenographer. He never *sees* the letter he is dictating, until it comes back to him, ready for his signature. He must depend on someone else for attention to all those *little things* which will help to make the letter attractive, and in harmony with the letterhead. That *someone* is the typist.

Of course, you understand what is meant by "an even touch" in typing—the striking of each key with the same force, so that a whole line looks like a printed unit, no letter blacker nor dimmer than the others. Nothing is more attractive, from a letter point of view, than a page of copy typed with a firm and even touch; and nothing *less* attractive than one which resembles a furrowed lawn. Not only does an uneven touch hurt the charm of a letter, but it also makes it more difficult to read, for the eye rebels against the alternately bold and weak letters. Compare the two paragraphs that follow—both taken from actual business letters. It is foolish to ask which of the two typists had an even touch, because the contrast is too great. The one paragraph is a fine example of skilled workmanship; the other is just messy.

The  
Fingers  
of This  
Typist  
Hit with  
Alternate  
Puffs  
and  
Pokes

The writer has since having this report talk-  
ed with Mr. Van ortwick of Kissick Company and in the absence  
of Mr. Kissick learned that he would suggest to Mr. Kissick  
that if he had not already written to you to do so, because  
he believed thoroughly in the Exposition, having previously  
obtained benefits from it. We are hoping that you have heard  
from Kissick Company and that you will now be inclined to  
consider exhibit space. We shall be pleased to have advice  
that you will wish to do so with an indication of the approxi-  
mate amount of space that you could use so that we will be in  
good position to recommend the location to you.

But  
This One  
Hit the  
Keys with  
an Even  
Touch

You know, we condemn liquor, and many happily await  
the day that for the second time it will pass out  
of the American picture, but an occasion like the  
one you and Carl and I enjoyed brings men closer  
together, and we find that we have many things in  
common which strengthen our friendship and our  
belief in each other. It was my real pleasure to  
enjoy that hour or so with you and Carl.

ABOVE—UNEVEN TOUCH  
BELOW—EVEN TOUCH



As it happens, the letterhead on which the first paragraph traveled is equally sloppy, so that there is nothing at all to create favorable attention before the reader begins to see what the letter has to say—*if* he ever does. But you can imagine how such a typed monstrosity would spoil the effect of *any* business message, even though the letterhead was an aristocrat of highest degree.

You might say, "If the typing touch of the girl who handles my letters is not even, what can I do about it?" This is an embarrassing question, for we have nothing against the fair sex, but obviously the only answer is, "See that she does better, or get a new one." There seems to be no excuse for an uneven touch in typing, because skill is acquired, as in every other human endeavor, by practice. Most of the Business Colleges are turning out good typists, but when one knows she has a poor touch the incentive of holding her job should be reason enough for improvement.

Certainly, in our opinion, no business executive can afford to put up with inferior workmanship, especially if the employee is indifferent to a fault, and makes no effort to correct it. The trouble has been, however, that many business men do not themselves seem to be particular about the appearance of their letters, or enough interested to point out obvious faults. Any improvement in business correspondence is a matter of *teamwork* between those who dictate, and those who type, them.

A very simple and easily corrected fault in typing, one that makes the letters look "fuzzy," is the failure on the part of the operator to clean the keys of her machine regularly. Thus, certain letters like "W" and "O" become filled with dried ink, and the typing takes on a similar effect to that caused by an uneven touch. Good stenographers do not need to be reminded to do this cleaning job, and any evidence to the contrary is proof of indifference.

*A sow's ear won't make a silk purse.* In commenting on the relation between good work and the pride of the worker, it is well that we should remember the necessity of company co-operation in supplying adequate and up-to-date materials and equipment. The best typist in the world, eager to excel and proud of her craftsmanship, could hardly be expected to turn out fine looking letters if forced to labor under the handicaps of an obsolete typewriter, cheap ribbons that smudge at the slightest provocation, and paper so inferior in quality that it will not stand an erasure without leaving a smear. As the old saying goes, "one can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear," and no typist can make a superlative letter unless supplied with the right tools.

A cheap typewriter ribbon not only tends to "fuzz" the typed lines, but the small saving over the cost of a good one is more than



offset by frequent replacements. It is poor economy for any business executive to save a few pennies and let cheap-looking letters represent the company, when those reflecting pride and quality could earn dollars in goodwill and more sales. Thus, the typist who is expected to turn out work which is outstanding, and a credit to the company, should be provided with every facility for meeting that objective—a comfortable chair and desk, adequate light, a



## The M. B. Cook Company

BEAVER CARBON PAPERS • *the line that can't be matched* • BEAVER INKED RIBBONS

506 SOUTH DEARBORN STREET  
TELEPHONES HARRISON 6066  
CHICAGO

### Specimen writing of an ordinary ribbon.

This ribbon gives an uneven, smeary, heavy black outline. This is due to the use of a coarse fabric, inked with an ink of inferior quality. A ribbon of this type will deteriorate with age. Your records will have no permanency.

.....

### Specimen writing of a Beaver Super Superb #1 Ink Ribbon.

The advantage of this Super Superb ribbon, made in a variety of degrees of inking, are permanency; resistance to action of time or elements; sharpness of delineation, cleanliness of copy and erasure; suitable amount of ink deposit for operator's touch, correct consistency and color tone of ink for the paper, typewriter and type size being used, and exceptional long life or wear.

.....

THE M. B. COOK COMPANY



modern typewriter in perfect condition, the best quality ribbons, and stationery which will accentuate her own handiwork. On the other hand, if favored with those advantages, the same executive has the right to insist that the typist give in return the same degree of perfection.

*Placing the letter on the page.* From experience in typing many letters, it is easy to judge accurately how much space on the page a letter is going to take. With this forecast, the typist is able to "frame" any letter so that the margins are about the same width—narrow margins for long letters, and wide margins for short ones. The letter on page 280, typed by the secretary to Mr. Clyde W. Young, is about as near a work of art as any letter could be. An amateur typist might spend an hour trying to "frame" a letter so perfectly, but to this expert it must have been only a small incident in a busy day. This assumption is not far-fetched, because other letters coming from Mr. Young's office are typed with the same feeling for beauty and balance on the page.

The same Monarch letter, retyped for comparison, has lost the impression of quality. With the narrow margins, and the high position on the page, it looks top-heavy, and like any other of the many letters that are dashed off with no regard for "harmonious proportion" on the page.

"But what difference does it make?" you can hear some business men asking. Yes, and they could just as well go on and say, "A letter is a letter like a pig is a pig." We heard that, too, as long ago as in the first section of this Handbook.

But it *does* make a difference—a whale of a difference—how a business letter *looks*, and what it speaks for, before a word of the message is read. An impression of quality carries over to the products or services offered by the company. To pull this Monarch letter from the envelope, to sense at first glance the care and pride in its preparation, is to make one feel that the insurance sold by the company *must* be of the same fine quality.

*The format of the typed letter.* When it comes to arranging the various parts of a business letter on the page, there is no one form that might be called "best." The decision depends on the personal taste of the man for whom the letters are typed, and the only limitation is that of consistency. For example, if indented paragraphs are preferred, then they *all* must be indented, and with the same number of spaces. It is not uncommon to see a very wide indentation in the opening paragraph, and a smaller one for the others, but this in our opinion is not pleasing to the eye, and there is no reason to justify it.

Surveying the letter to be typed on the page, the typist is con-



scious of one major part—the body—and several accessories. Not all accessories are used in every letter, but they may include:

The date.	The complimentary close.
Name of recipient.	Name of writer.
His title.	His title.
His address.	Name of company.
The salutation.	Initials of writer and typist.
Reference or identification line.	Postscript.

For the use of these various items, certain forms have been established by utility and custom, and we shall investigate what they are. It must be plain that they need to be assembled on the page in a format which is both practical and orderly. What that format is to be depends on the judgment and good taste of the individual responsible. It may be dictated by the man who writes the letters, in other cases, by company regulation. The latter is the best practice since it results in uniformity in style, and is the format considered “best” by the correspondence supervisor, or the officials of the firm. Certainly, it is not a decision that should be left to the typist.

Suppose we see what some of the more common forms are like. There are others, of course, because some of the more adventure-some letter-carpenters are always experimenting with new ways of doing things. Here we will only concern ourselves with the forms generally accepted by business, which of course represent ninety-nine per cent of all the letters written.

So far as we know, no one has attempted to tabulate the use of these current formats in percentages, but it is our guess that the one most popular today is the *blocked* letter. This is the form in which all of the body lines start even with the left-hand margin, with only the date line, the complimentary close, and the identification of the writer, his title and company, remaining on the right half of the page. There are no indented lines to start each paragraph, or in the part which carries the recipient's title, company, and address. The effect, as illustrated on page 282, is both substantial and appealing. In our opinion, it is the best looking of all the forms now in use.

In some blocked letters, the practice is carried to an even greater extreme by moving the complimentary close and the items that go with the signature to the left-hand side. This leaves only the date line “off the beam” and sometimes it is placed directly in the center



# MONARCH LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

LIFE ACCIDENT AND HEALTH INSURANCE



CLYDE W. YOUNG, President

SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE  
PRESIDENT

October 17, 1939

Mr. L. E. Frailley  
1053 North Shore Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois

My dear Cy:

Thanks a lot for your letter. If I have contributed anything to the present-day thinking, I am happy.

In summarizing briefly this particular experience, I think of the story that is told of Mark Twain's first visit to the Atlantic Ocean. As he stood looking out upon miles of water before him, his host asked,

"What do you think of our ocean, Mr. Clemens?"

To which Mr. Clemens replied,

"It seems to be a huge success."

Tell Mary I am happy to have acquired another booster and I hope that my friend, Joe Behan did not tire her out. He is a remarkable man, has a host of friends and an unlimited faculty for spreading good cheer. It was nice to see you both, even if it was for only a short time.

Hope this finds you well and may the enthusiasm, originality and capacity for friendship of Frailley & Associates continue to spread their beams of light.

Sincerely yours,

CWY/HW

President

## A LETTER PERFECTLY FRAMED ON THE PAGE

of the page. An example of the "all blocked" format is the letter on page 284. The idea as yet has not gained much headway, perhaps because of the feeling that it throws the whole ensemble off balance. However, it does have attention value, and we see no serious objection to it.

A third style, and the oldest in business, is one with indented lines, as displayed on page 283. Probably it has retained its



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Hope this finds you well and may the enthusiasm, originality and capacity for friendship of Frailey & Associates continue to spread their beams of light.

Sincerely yours,

CWY/EW

President

## COPY OF SAME LETTER IN TOP-HEAVY POSITION

popularity because many people like the appearance of the indentations, but the reason for them—at least in the body of the letter—no longer exists. When, in the early days, letters were written in long hand, and usually double spaced, an indented line indicated the beginning of a new paragraph. But the coming of the typewriter has made that device unnecessary, since a new paragraph is indicated by simply leaving a blank space.



There seems to be no established practice with respect to the number of spaces that should be struck on the typewriter before an indented line begins. Some use three spaces, some five, some ten, and others go almost to the center of the page before typing the start of the indented line. These variations are merely a matter of personal taste, and no one can say that one is better than

*Fraily*

22 EAST GAY STREET  
COLUMBUS 15, OHIO  
MAIN 2368

December 15, 1946.

Mr. Otto B. Keller,  
2345 Main Street,  
Restown, Texas.

Dear Otto:

Are you feeling? How could I forget that evening we sat together at the banquet. Let it remain a secret between us, but to tell the truth, I thought you were a lot more interesting than the speaker.

It's grand to know that you and Mrs. Keller are driving through Columbus this weekend. But cancel the "through" because you are going to stay all night with us, and we won't take any back-talk about that either.

Since you are leaving Indianapolis right after lunch, you should get to this village about four o'clock, and that's just perfect. Drive east on Broad about four miles after you pass the Governor's work shop, and then start looking for a street named after an Irishman called Cassidy. Turn left there, and go as far as the street will take you.

That's your stop, and if you don't make it, you will drive right across Mary's roses, and into the middle of our dining room. Don't worry if you do, as we only rent the place anyway.

We will all be waiting to welcome you -- Mary, myself, and the two best Senlyhans in Ohio. Tobey may ask for your credentials, for he is sheriff by self appointment, and naturally would be on guard against any cowboy from Texas. But Bitsey is a little wanton, and loves big handsome men at first sight.

Okeh, it's a date! Saturday, about five! That allows another hour just in case you stop to pick wild flowers. After an introduction to Old Grandad (from Kentucky, sir) we'll have dinner, and then a few nice folks will drop in to meet you. By day-break, you should get to bed, and sometime later you can resume the trek east -- if you and Mrs. Keller don't like us well enough to stay any longer.

Cordially yours,

L. E. "Cy" Fraily



the rest. After all, inasmuch as the indentations are used to improve the appearance of the typed letter, it is the job of those responsible to decide *what* number of spaces look best.

Fourth of the formats is a compromise between the blocked and indented styles. Thus, only the paragraphs are indented. Here you see, page 286, a device which seems neither consistent nor at-

*Fraily*

22 EAST GAY STREET  
COLUMBUS 15, OHIO  
MAIN 2368

December 15, 1946.

Mr. Otto B. Keller,  
2345 Main Street,  
Bestown, Texas.

Dear Otto:

Are you fooling? How could I forget that evening we sat together at the banquet. Let it remain a secret between us, but to tell the truth, I thought you were a lot more interesting than the speaker.

It's grand to know that you and Mrs. Keller are driving through Columbus this weekend. But cancel the "through" because you are going to stay all night with us, and we won't take any back-talk about that either.

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Cordially yours,

L. E. "Cy" Fraily





GRAND AT TENTH - DES MOINES, IOWA  
E. O. FENTON, B.A. - DIRECTOR

## American Institute of Business

FULLY ACCREDITED

Des Moines, Iowa

February 12, 1940

Miss Frances Bailey  
F. W. Fitch Company  
304 15th Street  
Des Moines, Iowa

Dear Miss Bailey:

It is a real pleasure to have you in Mr. Frailey's letter writing class.

"Doc" Frailey is going to dispense a thousand dollars' worth of good, usable ideas on business letters during the next seven weeks.

He is a famous "doctor" for curing the pains, aches, and bruises caused by poor letters. For years Frailey has run a "clinic" for pale and puny letters, and his fame has grown by leaps and bounds until today he is "tops" in the letter writing field.

Here is an A.I.B. souvenir pencil. Make a note that you have a date at A.I.B. the next seven Wednesday nights.

The class is now going--and going places. Come early, if you can, and get acquainted.

I wish you increasing, continued success in your business, and pleasant personal progress.

Sincerely yours,

*E. O. Fenton*

DIRECTOR

LOF:P



50 FENTON B.A. DIRECTOR  
DAVENPORT

AFFILIATED WITH AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF COMMERCE IN DAVENPORT

### BLOCKED SIGNATURE

tractive. To block or not to block is the question, and there is no good reason for a combination of the two methods. But this once more is only an opinion, and no letter-writer ever has been arrested, or accused of bad taste, because he preferred the compromise.

The worst of all the styles, as we view them, is the one displayed





June 19, 1945.

Mr. L. E. Frailey  
22 East Kay Street  
Columbus, Ohio.

Dear Mr. Frailey:

Thank you for sending me an autographed copy of your "Smooth Sailing Letters". I dislike writing you before reading the book but have been away from the Office several days and it was on my desk when I came in this morning.

I know I will enjoy reading and should learn a great deal from the book and am flattered on your remembering me. I shall never forget your lectures and hope I will have another opportunity of hearing you.

With best wishes to you and Mrs. Frailey.

Sincerely,  
*Ruby Lane Justin*

NAME AND ADDRESS BLOCKED  
PARAGRAPHS INDENTED



on page 286. Every line in the body of the message is indented except the beginnings of paragraphs. To be sure, this format has the merit of gaining special attention, since it differs so widely from the others, but we doubt very much if the final reaction is favorable. To gain the reader's attention by trick typing is one thing; to please him with it is another.



May 15, 1946.

Mr. John Doe,  
111 East Main Street,  
Kansas City, Missouri.

Dear John:

I was in Chicago the other day for the purpose of giving a talk to the executives of one of the banks, and while there I asked Miss Underwood to find out where you were. Her letter received today gave me the above address.

The principle reason I wanted your address was to send you mine in order that I might not miss seeing you if you happened through Denver any time soon. They are having a big real estate confab here this week, but insist that you are not on the program.

My tour with the Army ended November 15. I was commissioned a Major and later was promoted to Lt. Colonel, but not soon enough to get my eagles before the war ended. I enjoyed my service a lot, and learned much. I've wanted to come back to this country for a long time and this appeared to be the time to make the break so here I am, and very happy.

During these past years I often have thought of you. Our friendship has been worth a great deal to me, and I hope that someday we may have the opportunity of sitting down to "sorta" lick the chops of memory together.

I am still a bachelor and my brother and I have just taken over some bachelor quarters. That means you have a place to stay when you are here. Please remember me to the wife.

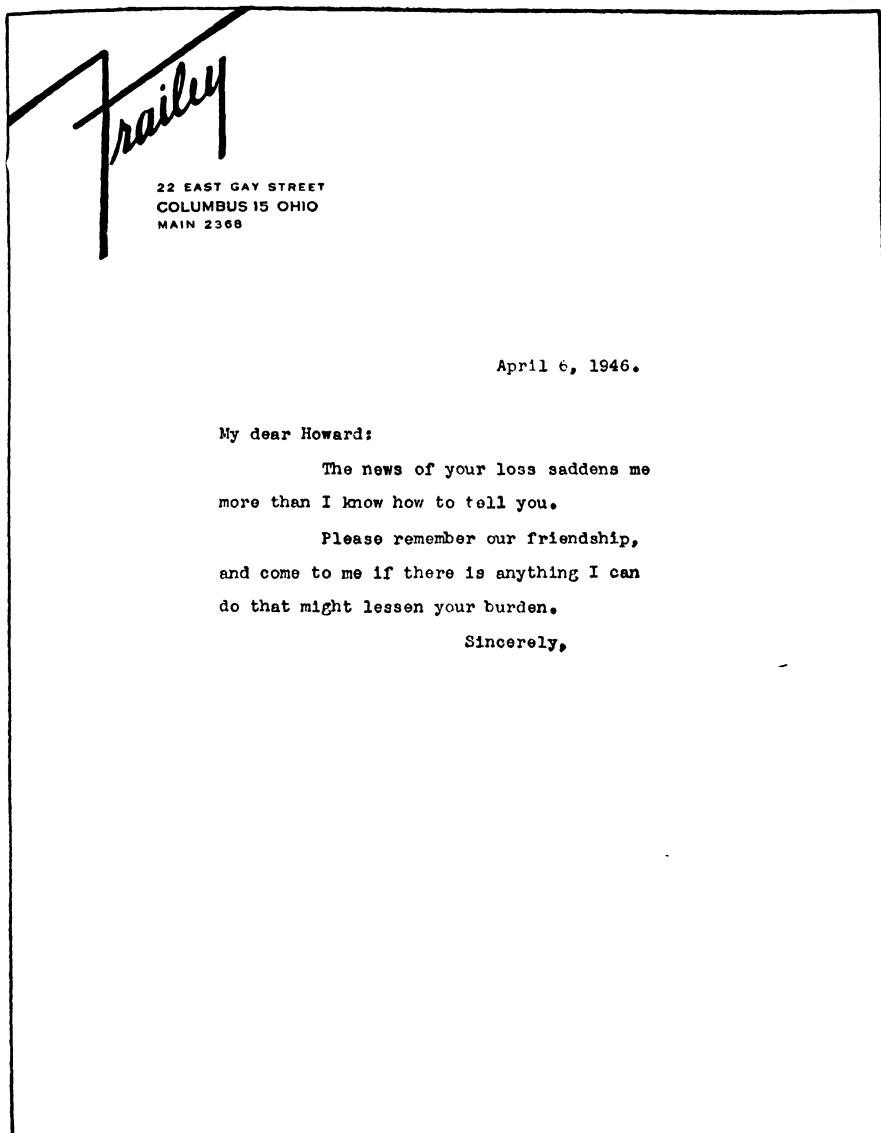
Sincerely yours,

Perhaps the use of double-spacing also deserves a comment. It is seen now and then, when the letter is very short. The effect is to fill more of the page, and thus avoid that "lonesome" appearance of a letter which consists of just a few words. Of course, in this format, the indentation is necessary. See the page opposite.

*The date line.* The general custom is to place the date line of a business letter on the upper right-hand side of the page, so that it stands two or more spaces below the printed letterhead, and with the end of the line as even as possible with the margin made by the body. Since the latter is never exactly straight, as on the left hand side, the alignment of the date line can only be made with approximate accuracy.

It cannot be set forth as an absolute rule that the date line *must* be in the above described position. Here again, we face a decision which depends more on personal judgment, and the willingness to










DOUBLE SPACING FOR THE PERSONAL TOUCH

go along with prevailing custom, than it does on any implacable authority which cannot be broken. In some cases, and particularly those where the design of the letterhead favors the variation, you run across date lines which are centered on the page immediately below the name of the city and state. For example, the position of the date line on the Armstrong Packing Company letter



shown below seems to be a good one, and better from the appearance angle than if it had been typed in the customary spot, to the right.

Neither is it reasonable to establish, as some letter manuals do, any exact number of spaces that the date line should be typed below the letterhead. If the body of the letter is short and, to gain the best appearance, it is dropped down to the center of the page, the

	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Armstrong Packing Company</h2> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">DIVISION OF SMITH &amp; COMPANY</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 5px;"> <span>DALLAS, TEXAS - PHONE HAR. 2101</span> <span>FORT WORTH, TEXAS - PHONE 6-3196</span> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>P. O. BOX 549</p> <p>FORT WORTH 1, TEXAS</p> <p>July 27, 1945</p> </div>	
<div style="margin-bottom: 20px;"> <p><b>Mr. P. A. Nelson</b>  Nelson Provision Company  303 Guadalupe St.  Austin, Texas</p> </div> <p>Dear Phil:</p> <p>It's a pleasure to do for you the little service that you request in your letter of July 26.</p> <p>I have just talked to our cooler man, Bo Ransom, and he is tagging up six nice U.S. Good Mutton, and we will ship them by a special truck which we have loading Monday for Austin. They will be there Tuesday morning.</p> <p>Let us know at any time we can be of service.</p> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>Sincerely yours,  ARMSTRONG PACKING COMPANY</p> <p style="margin-top: 40px;">SALESMANAGER</p> </div> <div style="margin-top: 40px;"> <p>PLANT SALES DEPT.  TAPING</p> </div>		



date line may well be dropped with it. There are also cases, although we do not like them, where the position of the date line is fixed by printing part of the numerals in the year on the page, so that the typist has no other choice than to fill in the missing number, and align the rest of the date line with it.

After the figure or figures designating the day of the month, the comma should follow immediately. It is unnecessary, and may be considered wrong to use *nd*, *rd*, *st*, or *th*.

*Wrong:*

April 1st, 1947  
March 3rd, 1947  
July 20th, 1947  
August 2nd, 1947

*Right:*

April 1, 1947  
March 3, 1947  
July 20, 1947  
August 2, 1947

In the above examples, the periods were omitted at the end of the date lines, although they just as properly could have been used; the decision depends on whether the punctuation of the name and address lines is "open" or "closed."

It is not thought good form to abbreviate the name of the month, or to substitute a figure for it.

*Wrong:*

Feb. 1, 1947  
Feb. 1, '47  
2-1-47  
2/1/47

*Right:*

February 1, 1947

In earlier days, it was quite customary to use words instead of figures for the year and day of the month. By some authorities, this is still advocated for letters of extreme formality, but we can think of no business contact where such formality is necessary. However, this is a question that may be answered by the individual, rather than set up as a rule or "must" in business letter forms.

*Wrong:* July tenth, Nineteen hundred and forty-seven

*Right:* July 10, 1947

*Variations in form of date line.* The great majority of date lines are typed in the sequence of month, day, and year. This is purely a matter of custom, as it would appear more logical to start with the smallest unit (the day) and proceed to the largest (the year). The latter is the form officially used by the military services. Some



letter-writers evidently agree with this logic, as you now and then encounter a date line typed in the following order.

25 September 1947 *instead of* September 25, 1947

When this newer form is used, and there is not the slightest objection to it, no punctuation is needed. The punctuation automatically becomes "open" for the inside address and signature lines.

That the form of the date line is not fixed except by custom is proved by the numerous attempts made to make it more interesting or ornamental. Often, the variation serves some special purpose for the company, as to call attention to an anniversary year. Other times it may simply represent the desire of the letter-man to get out of the groove and do something different. To ban such a device on the ground that it takes more time to type or read seems rather like splitting hairs, as anything done to improve the appearance or effectiveness of a business letter can only be judged by whether or not the results are worth the time and effort.

The forms taken by these date line variations are too numerous for description. Some seem within the bounds of good taste, others, too "wild and woolly." The latter, of course, do not merit your approval, but there are always those who dislike *any* departure from the conventional standard even though it may be good.

These examples are typical of special date lines typed in forms that get away from the conventional. Since the first job of a business letter is to get attention, it may be that in their small way they support that purpose. At least, they are different, and not displeasing to the eye. After all, there is no law that says this part of a letter must be typed on one line or in any certain position—nor is it a breach of business etiquette to use variety. The forms commonly seen have been developed by custom, and none are fixed or unchangeable.

August 26  
1947

26  
August  
1947

August 26  
1 9 4 7

26 August  
Our 50th Year  
1 9 4 7

Five More Days  
26 August 1947  
Clearance Sale

## 5. *The Inside Address*

*Useful for reference and filing.* The lines which identify and locate the recipient are called the "inside address," and in content



they should be exactly the same as those on the envelope which tell Uncle Sam to whom and where the delivery is to be made. The "rules" governing their use are given below, but again it is well to remember that in some respects they merely represent the preference of the majority of letter-writers, while those of the minority often take liberties with them.

The chief benefit of the inside address is to the company served by the writer of the letter, since it gives the information necessary for filing and future reference. Inasmuch as the recipient is thoroughly acquainted with his own address, it would seem foolish to type it under his name, were it not for the utility purpose of recording it on the carbon copy.

All right, here are the things to remember in connection with the inside address. Call them rules, if you wish, for they tend to create orderliness and uniformity when co-ordinated with similar conventions that govern the handling of the salutation, the complimentary close, and the other parts of the typed letter.

1. *Position on the page.* It is the first line of the inside address which determines what the margin shall be on the left side of the page. The whole appearance of the letter is influenced by how well the typist is able to select the position which will leave the right amount of space for the other parts, and thus achieve that "harmony of proportion" so necessary if the best possible impression is to be made.

The exact spot where the first letter of the first word is to be typed, as "M" in "Mr. John D. Doe," depends on the length of the copy which is to be balanced on the page. If the letter is a short one, the inside address may be started several spaces below the date line, but even if the letter is long, a minimum of two spaces is considered necessary to avoid the appearance of over-crowding. In the same way, the width of the margin may be varied, but should never be less than one inch. It is much better to run the letter to a second page than to disregard these two minimums in an effort to squeeze more on the one page than it should carry.

The lines of the inside address should always be single spaced, but they may be blocked or indented according to the form selected for the rest of the letter. In either case, the first line of the inside address and the salutation start even and are aligned with all the lines in the body which are not indented.

In the second example, notice that all of the indentions are of the same number of spaces. In this case, the number is three, although some letter writers prefer five. In our opinion, the shorter number makes the best appearance. Some writers also like a longer indention for the start of paragraphs, but this practice is not recom-



Mr. John W. Doe, President,  
Universal Motor Corporation,  
111 Washington Avenue,  
Jefferson City, Missouri.

Dear Mr. Doe:

(Blocked)

I appreciated your letter asking how we like the car purchased from your good company six months ago. In these days, it is rather unusual to find a company interested in a customer so long after the sale has been made, and it speaks for the quality of your services.

Mr. John W. Doe, President,  
Universal Motor Corporation,  
111 Washington Avenue,  
Jefferson City, Missouri.

Dear Mr. Doe:

(Indented)

I appreciated your letter asking how we like the car purchased from your good company six months ago. In these days, it is rather unusual to find a company interested in a customer so long after the sale has been made, and it speaks for the quality of your services.

mended since it disturbs the uniformity which is most pleasing to the eye.

Although the logical place for the inside address seems to be below the date line and above the salutation, custom has decreed that in official or personal letters it may be typed at the bottom of the letter, two spaces below the signature. This is merely a matter of the writer's own inclination, or the procedure of the authority responsible for the correspondence. Here is an example:

. . . so please feel free to come to us any time you have a question to ask about our services.

Cordially yours,

Bernard B. Baker

Mr. George Browne,  
888 Broad Street,  
Columbus, Ohio.

When this position is used for the inside address, the letter starts with the salutation. Notice, too, that the lines of the inside address, although typed at the bottom of the page, are still even with the left-hand margin. In the above example the lines are



blocked, but they should be indented if indentions are made of paragraph beginnings.

2. *Punctuation.* The oldest method of punctuating the inside address is to place a comma at the end of each line except the last, which ends with a period. This is called "closed" punctuation, in contrast with the "open" style in which no marks are used at the end of any of the lines—except when the name of a company ends with an abbreviated word.

The punctuation of the date line determines whether that of the inside address is to be "closed" or "open," since the form used in both of these parts must *agree*.

May 2, 1947.

(Closed) Mr. George Browne,  
888 Broad Street,  
Columbus, Ohio.  
Dear Mr. Browne:

May 2, 1947 -

(Open) Mr. George Browne  
888 Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio  
Dear Mr. Browne:

May 9, 1947.

(Closed) Mr. John Jones, Secretary,  
Jones Costume Co.,  
234 East Gay Street,  
Decatur, Illinois.  
Dear Mr. Jones:

May 9, 1947

(Open) Mr. John Jones, Secretary  
Jones Costume Co.  
234 East Gay Street  
Decatur, Illinois  
Dear Mr. Jones:



Two facts need to be remembered in connection with the punctuation of the inside address. The first is that no matter which form is used, open or closed, the salutation is commonly followed with a colon. The second is that "open" does not mean any of the punctuation marks can be omitted *except* at the end of the lines. Thus, in the first and second examples above, a comma properly appears after the word "Columbus."

Also notice that in the second line of the third example the word "company" could not be spelled out to agree with Secretary, Street, and Illinois, because the abbreviated form is a part of the official firm name. Later, in the fourth example, which was open, the abbreviation, "Co." had to be punctuated with the period, although the comma was omitted to agree with the other line endings. This illustrates a law which in all cases must be followed - it is not permissible to alter in any way the established form of a firm or association name. If a word is abbreviated, or if & is used for *and*, the typing must conform.

3. *Content.* The simple rule for the make-up of the inside address is that it should contain everything necessary for the easy delivery of the letter, a duplicate of the address on the envelope, and that it should give proper recognition of title when the recipient holds a position of importance in the company. In typing the sequence of lines, the practice is to start with the smallest item and work down to the largest - name, title, company, street address or box number, city, and state. Also, if the letter is going outside the United States, the name of the country would come last.

To be sure, not all of these items appear in every inside address. If the letter is dictated to an individual, and the contents are personal, the name of the company or association is not used unless it is necessary as a guide to delivery.

The shortest form of all is that of two lines—name, city, and state—as when the letter is going to some very small village where the street address is not needed, or to a public official whose address is well known to post office authorities. A none too popular example of the latter is, "Collector of Internal Revenue, Detroit, Michigan."

Here are examples, in the order of their complexity.

Mr. Hiram Cornplanter,  
Minonk, Illinois.

Mr. John Q. Public,  
Rural Route 2,  
LaGrange, Indiana.



Mr. Jonathan Doe,  
505 Oregon Street,  
Urbana, Illinois.

---

The Purina Mills,  
Seventh and Gratiot Streets,  
St. Louis, Missouri.

---

Mr. William B. Black, Treasurer,  
The Continental Corporation,  
10 Rut Road,  
Newark, Ohio.

---

Mr. Frank Hesselroth, Manager,  
Advertising & Sales Executives Club,  
913 Baltimore Avenue,  
Kansas City, Missouri.

---

Mr. James Doe,  
Superintendent of Maintenance,  
The Buckeye Building,  
42 East Gay Street,  
Columbus, Ohio.

---

Mr. Oscar Merriwell, President,  
Springfield Advertising Club,  
Petterson and Hogart,  
987 Washington Avenue,  
Springfield, Illinois.

---

Mr. Morgan Hanford Goodfellow,  
Assistant to the Vice-President,  
Johnstown Construction Company,  
4454 Riverside Road,  
Cleveland, Ohio.

---

Mr. Burton Maxwell McPherson,  
Chairman, Entertainment Committee,  
Sales & Advertising Club,  
McPherson, Mack, and Monihan,  
333 Grandville Avenue,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

To avoid the formidable appearance of the six-line address, it is desirable to place the name and title of the individual on the first line, but this is not always possible—see last address above. Had the first and second lines been combined, the one line would have stretched across the page to a point below the date line; moreover,



it would have appeared off balance with the rest of the inside address.

Just how far across the page the first line of the inside address may properly reach is a debatable question of no great importance. As in all matters which influence the appearance of a typed letter, the aim is to make the best possible impression, but what determines "best" is often a matter of opinion. Some letter authorities say that the first line of the inside address should not reach beyond the center of the page. Roughly, this is probably as good a guide as any, although no harm is done if the line happens to exceed that point by a few spaces.

To keep the first line within the limitation of half the page, one of the leading experts, William H. Butterfield, approves the "carry-over" of part of the line to the space below. According to Mr. Butterfield, "if this is done, the continuation should be indented five spaces when the paragraphs of the letter body are not indented, and the same amount as the paragraphs when the latter are indented." He gives the following examples:

Dr. Edward J. Bell, Director  
Department of Aeronautical  
Engineering  
The University of Oklahoma  
Norman, Oklahoma

Dear Sir:

We have given much thought to your suggestion . . .

Professor H. Carl Brighton  
Massachusetts Institute of  
Technology  
Cambridge Station  
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Professor Brighton:

It was a pleasure to hear from you regarding . . .

Although none of the above examples have included Postal Zones, they should appear when known to the writer. This new device suggested by our Government speeds letter deliveries and deserves our co-operation. The place, of course, is after the city name—Chicago 38, Illinois.

4. *Numbers.* The use of a sign or word before a street number is taboo in the inside address. The number can stand on its own legs.

Wrong: Mrs. Jacob Goldman,  
#3561 Lindell Boulevard,  
Louisville, Kentucky.



Wrong: Mrs. Jacob Goldman,  
No. 3561 Lindell Boulevard,  
Louisville, Kentucky.

Right: Mrs. Jacob Goldman,  
3561 Lindell Boulevard,  
Louisville, Kentucky.

When the numeric names of streets and avenues are composed of single numbers, they should be spelled; when composed of compound numbers, use the figures.

Wrong: Seventy-third Street

Right: 73rd Street or 73 Street

Wrong: 4th Avenue

Right: Fourth Avenue

A possible exception to the above rule is created in those cities where numbers and words are used to identify streets and avenues of the same names, as "4th Street," and "Fourth Avenue"—the one thoroughfare usually running east and west, and the other north and south. In such cases, the typist uses the forms established by the city, as otherwise there might be confusion in delivery.

5. *Abbreviations.* The use of abbreviations in the inside address of a business letter is dictated by custom, or by the personal inclination of the writer or company. Even when "to do or not to do" is a matter of choice, the fact still remains that most typed words look better when *not* abbreviated, and nothing is gained by the shortened forms except a little saving of space and time. Certainly, good taste decrees *consistency* in the one direction or the other.

Wrong: Mr. John T. Williamson,  
1876 Parkview Avenue,  
Atlanta, Ga.

Right: Mr. John T. Williamson,  
1876 Parkview Avenue,  
Atlanta, Georgia.

Right: Mr. John T. Williamson,  
1876 Parkview Ave.,  
Atlanta, Ga.

In general, the abbreviations used may be grouped in three classes: obligatory, customary, and permissible. Those in the last group are left to the choice of the writer, but it is not wise to disregard those in the second group dictated by custom. Those in the first group may not under any circumstances be spelled out.



(a) Abbreviations that *must* be used in both the outside and the inside address are those already fixed in the official name of the company or association as indicated on their letterhead. Even though the abbreviated word may not appeal to the writer of the letter, and he would much prefer to see it spelled out, there still remains no choice. This also is true of the substitution of the sign & for *and*. While not technically an abbreviation, it may logically be included with the others, such as *Co.* for *Company*, and *Corp.* for *Corporation*.

(b) There are many of the abbreviations so firmly established by custom that they should not be tampered with. For example, the use of *Mister* instead of the abbreviated form would be rather sure to attract unfavorable attention, and thus in its small way detract from the success of the letter. These abbreviations established by custom are listed below:

Mr., Mrs., Messrs., Mmes., Esq., Jr., Sr.

Those of professional or official significance—such as C.P.A. for Certified Public Accountant, Ph.D. for Doctor of Philosophy, and M.D.S. for Master of Dental Surgery.

Those that stand for trade associations, such as A.A.A. for American Automobile Association.

Names of honorary significance, such as D.A.R. for Daughters of the American Revolution, D.S.O. for Distinguished Service Order, and F.A.M. for Free and Accepted Masons.

The other very common forms, such as P.O.B. for Post Office Box, or M.P. for Member of Parliament.

(c) The abbreviations left to choice are many. For example:

Titles, such as Prof. for Professor, Rev. for Reverend, and Hon. for Honorable.

The names of the states, with certain exceptions. (See list below.)

Business designations, such as Pres. for President, Sec. for Secretary, and Treas. for Treasurer.

Words standing for street direction, such as S. for South, W. for West.

Names of thoroughfares, such as St. for Street, Blvd. for Boulevard, or Ave. for Avenue.

As previously stated, these abbreviations in the flexible group are best when used only for a good reason, such as to shorten a long line in the inside address. They do not improve the typed letter's appearance.



*State abbreviations.* Following are the approved abbreviations for the states, territories, and possessions:

Alabama.....	Ala.
Arizona.....	Ariz.
Arkansas.....	Ark.
California.....	Calif.
Canal Zone.....	C. Z.
Colorado.....	Colo.
Connecticut.....	Conn.
Delaware.....	Del.
District of Columbia.....	D. C.
Florida.....	Fla.
Georgia.....	Ga.
Hawaii.....	T. H.
Illinois.....	Ill.
Indiana.....	Ind.
Kansas.....	Kans.
Kentucky.....	Ky.
Louisiana.....	La.
Maryland.....	Md.
Massachusetts.....	Mass.
Michigan.....	Mich.
Minnesota.....	Minn.
Mississippi.....	Miss.
Missouri.....	Mo.
Montana.....	Mont.
Nebraska.....	Nebr.
Nevada.....	Nev.
New Hampshire.....	N. H.
New Jersey.....	N. J.
New Mexico.....	N. Mex.
New York.....	N. Y.
North Carolina.....	N. C.
North Dakota.....	N. Dak.
Oklahoma.....	Okla.
Oregon.....	Oreg.
Pennsylvania.....	Pa.
Philippine Islands.....	P. I.
Puerto Rico.....	P. R.
Rhode Island.....	R. I.
South Carolina.....	S. C.
South Dakota.....	S. Dak.
Tennessee.....	Tenn.
Texas.....	Tex.
Vermont.....	Vt.
Virginia.....	Va.
Washington.....	Wash.
West Virginia.....	W. Va.
Wisconsin.....	Wis.
Wyoming.....	Wyo.



Not abbreviated:

Alaska	Ohio
Guam	Samoa
Idaho	Utah
Iowa	Virgin Islands
Maine	

A few additional facts should be understood with respect to abbreviations in the inside address.

(a) When the person addressed holds more than one degree, indicate only the highest, unless there are two or more in different fields of endeavor.

Wrong: Professor Albert S. Jones, A.B., A.M., Ph.D.

Right: Albert S. Jones, Ph.D.

Right: Asa B. Underwood, A.M., LL.D.

(b) When only the last name is known, it is considered discourteous to abbreviate the title.

Wrong: Prof. Bagby . . . Dr. Schreiner

Right: Professor Bagby . . . Doctor Schreiner

(c) If the last name only is used, the word *Reverend* should be followed by *Mr.*—or *Dr.* if the clergyman is a D.D. It is customary to abbreviate this word, unless preceded by *The*.

Wrong: Rev. Boardman  
Reverend Boardman

Right: Rev. Mr. Boardman  
Rev. Dr. Boardman  
Rev. James Boardman  
The Reverend Mr. Boardman  
The Reverend Doctor Boardman  
The Reverend James Boardman

(d) The use of the word *Honorable* and its abbreviation is the same as that of *Reverend*.

Wrong: Hon. Bricker  
Honorable Bricker

Right: Hon. Mr. Bricker  
Hon. John W. Bricker  
The Honorable John W. Bricker  
The Honorable Mr. Bricker



(c) The word *Esquire* or its abbreviation is commonly used after the names of government executives, mayors of cities, diplomatic officers below the grade of minister, American consular officers, the Clerk of the U. S. Supreme Court, and officers of the court. It may also be applied to any individual, except when addressed with his wife. The custom dates back to early days and is fast fading in popularity. When a title precedes the name, the use of the word or its abbreviation is not permitted.

Wrong: Mr. L. E. Mackie, Esq.

Right: L. E. Mackie, Esq.

Wrong: Dr. Claude Minton, Esq.

Right: Claude Minton, Esq., M. D.

(f) The use of *Messrs.* is not permissible in addressing companies or association with impersonal names. It is okay for a company where the names in the title represent men, or men and women.

Wrong: Messrs. General Electric Company  
Messrs. Illinois Central System

Right: General Electric Company  
Illinois Central System

Right: Messrs. Brown, Brown, and Brown  
Messrs. Harrison Parks and Bros.  
Messrs. Wollett and Kirby

(g) When the company or organization is headed by women, married or single, either *Mesdames* or *Mmes.* may be used.

Right: Mesdames Darby and Moore  
Mmes. Darby and Moore

(h) A widow should be addressed as *Mrs.*—and socially she continues to be known by her husband's name. In legal and financial affairs, however, her given name is substituted.

Socially: Mrs. Abner Carter  
Legally: Mrs. Julia Carter

(i) A divorced woman may continue to use her husband's full name, or a combination of his and her surnames. She does not use her given name, as that is supposed to indicate her guilt in the incidents leading to the divorce. However, if she has legally resumed her maiden name, she may be addressed as *Miss*.



Right: Mrs. Andrew H. Bronson  
Wrong: Mrs. Bernice Bronson  
Right: Mrs. Baker Bronson  
Right: Miss Bernice Baker (if legal)

6. *Capitalization.* Prevailing customs for capitalization within the inside address are as follows. Some are a matter of correct English practice, others are rules developed by common usage.

Capitalize—

(a) Initials, given names, and surnames.

(b) All words and abbreviations in the names of companies, trade associations, and other organizations, *except* conjunctions, prepositions, and articles. However, an *exception* to the exception is that an article must be capitalized if it starts a line.

Right: Empire Service Corporation  
The Brokers' Institute  
Peoria Advertising and Selling Club  
Baker, Brown, and Buggins, Inc.  
The City of Columbus

(c) Names of thoroughfares, and words that describe direction.

Right: 22 East Gay Street  
431 West Fifth Avenue  
33 Park Terrace  
5676 Oleotangy Boulevard  
6654 Riverside Drive  
377 Linden Place  
111 Lee Circle  
4443 Magnolia Plaza  
7982 Rock Terrace Highway  
4433 Cemetery Road

(d) Words to indicate post office delivery, and rural mail routes.

Right: Post Office Box 99  
P. O. Box 333, Station B  
Care of General Delivery  
Rural Route 3



(e) Names of buildings, and units in them.

Right:   The Buckeye Building  
          Room 777, Federal Insurance Building  
          Apartment D, the Park Plaza  
          Suite BB, Jefferson Hotel

(f) Names of cities, counties, territories, provinces, states, nations and their abbreviations.

Right:   Columbus, Franklin County, Ohio  
          Washington, D. C.

(g) Abbreviations for degrees and other official designations.

(h) Titles and designations of rank or position, such as Miss, Mrs., Mr., Professor, Dr., the Reverend, Messrs., Mmes., Secretary, Vice-President, Chairman of the Board, Manager, Editor, Personnel Director, and the others. When the title consists of more than one word, all are capitalized except articles, conjunctions, and prepositions.

(i) Names of divisions or departments within an organization or company, except for articles, conjunctions, and prepositions.

Right:   Department of Finance  
          Maintenance and Repair Division  
          Committee for City Planning

7. *The attention line.* Considerable difference of thought exists in the business letter world with respect to the necessity of the attention line and where it should be placed. It is discussed here, in connection with the inside address, because it is the opinion of your commentator that nine out of ten of the attention lines encountered in business correspondence could just as well, or better, have been omitted. We see no reason, at least generally, why a letter should be addressed to a company, and then bounced back into the lap of an individual through an attention line. Why not address the letter to the individual, followed by the name of the company? This is a controversial question, and after you have examined the evidence on both sides, you may make your own decision as to which plan you prefer.

John Doe, for example, is about to write a letter, with a check enclosed, to the Canary Cracker Company. He would have sent



the money sooner, but an argument has been going on as to whether or not he is entitled to a special discount he thought he would get. Several letters have passed back and forth between John Doe and Robert Black, Credit Manager for the cracker company.

Okay, that is the simple background, and here is the problem faced by John Doe. Obviously, he owes the money to Canary Cracker Company, but all of his correspondence has been with Mr. Black. How shall his letter be directed? That is the point where the opinion of business men and letter experts seems to split. One group says that John Doe should write to the company, and ask that his letter be called to the attention of Robert Black. The other side says that is nonsense. Mr. Black's delegated responsibility in the company is understood. He is the Credit Manager. He *represents* the company, and has authority to make decisions. Why go around and around the mulberry bush? Write to Black direct.

Well, if you want to get in the fight, take off your coat. You are welcome. Here are the two ways that John Doe might address his letter.

With Attention Line	Canary Cracker Company, Main Street at Drexel, Hijinks, Colorado.
	Gentlemen: <i>Attention, Robert Black</i>
The Direct Approach	Mr. Robert Black, Credit Manager, Canary Cracker Company, Main Street at Drexel, Hijinks, Colorado.
	Dear Mr. Black:

If one looks with impartiality at both sides of the question, it is apparent that the attention line can at times serve a useful purpose. The chief objection is that it adds a formal touch to the appearance of the letter, and thus works against the major aim of making every letter a personal contact between writer and reader. Furthermore, it seems that some business men fall into the habit of using the attention line a lot more often than is necessary. But if there are circumstances which make the use advisable, as when some legal question is involved, or when the name of the head of a department is unknown, the attention line merits approval.

In the preceding example, the position of the line was opposite the salutation, with several spaces separating the two parts. This is



probably the most popular place for it, although many letter writers align it with the left-hand margin, a couple of spaces below the name of city and state. This practice has the advantage of making the attention line less conspicuous.

Buckeye Produce Company,  
912 South Market Street,  
Cleveland, Ohio.

*Attention: Mr. L. A. Angelo.*

Gentlemen:

Your last shipment of oranges was not up to standard, and we

The above position becomes almost imperative when the need is also felt for a reference line, such as the order number, the file number of the letter being answered, or the subject of the one being answered. In a consideration of the appearance of the letter, and the necessity for keeping it as simple as possible, it is much better when the letter does not need to be cluttered with any of these special items; when absolutely necessary, the following position is recommended.

Iowa Mail Order Company,  
343 Chapel Avenue,  
Davenport, Iowa.

*Attention: John B. Duffy*

Gentlemen:

*Order No. 7889*

The lawn mower which you billed on the above order number is being returned today because . . .

Sometimes to facilitate the handling of mail, large organizations ask that an identifying number or initials be mentioned when the reply to a letter is dictated. This leaves the writer no choice but to follow instructions, as otherwise his letter may not get to the right party, or receive prompt attention. There are also companies that ask on their letterheads that all mail be directed to the company, rather than to any individual in it. Here again, the writer should accept the fact that there must be a reason for the request, and comply with it.

A more modern way of using the attention line, and one which seems more friendly and natural, is as follows. Notice that the position may be opposite the salutation, or below the name of city and state.



Warner Feed Corporation,  
101 California Street,  
Indianapolis, Indiana.

*Mr. B. C. Phelps, Please.*

Gentlemen:

We are going to need another carload of starting feed within the next two weeks, and . .

Warner Feed Corporation,  
101 California Street,  
Indianapolis, Indiana.

Gentlemen:

*Mr. B. C. Phelps, Please.*

There is one style for the attention line which is out of date and especially displeasing in its suggestion of formality. This is the use of *Re*: with respect to the letter being answered, an order number, or the subject.

Even if the caption must be used, as it seldom has to be, the *Re*: is totally unnecessary, as the mere giving of prominence to the item tells the reader it is going to be the subject of the letter. Notice how some of the formality is lost by the omission of this little "throwback" to early letter-writing days.

*Re: Your letter of March 10*

*Your letter of March 10*

*Re: August Sales Contest*

*August Sales Contest*

*Re: Order No. 8873*

*Order Number 8873*

8. *Names.* Accuracy in the use of names is a most important requisite for the inside address, as well as any other place in the letter or on the envelope. The average individual holds high respect for his name, and wants nobody to take liberties with it. Furthermore, he has selected for his own use the form which he likes best, and any variation by others is likely to irritate him. He expects you to spell the words correctly, to use the right initials, and he doesn't like any combination to which he is not accustomed. Off-hand, you might think that any error which does not interfere with the delivery of the letter must be a small thing to worry about, but that is not true. It is discourteous to write any part of an individual's name incorrectly, and doing so is quite likely to hinder the success of the letter. For example:

John D. Jones does not appreciate being addressed as John B. Jones.



Conrad C. Nutter wants his first name spelled out, or he wouldn't sign it that way. He doesn't want you to write to him as C. C. Nutter.

J. Alphonse Goodfellow has some reason sufficient to himself for not spelling out the first name. Even though you knew it to be James, it would be unwise to address him as James Alphonse.

Wm. H. Warren likes the abbreviation for William. Then why take the chance of displeasing him by spelling out the word?

L. E. "Cy" Frailey may look like a funny way for a fellow to sign his name, and probably it is. But go along with him. He likes it, so humor the codger.

If Mr. Boone uses the signature Marshall V. Boone, III, then that's your cue. Address him the same way.

There may be no real reason for John Jacob Heinbaugh to place "Jr." after his name, because you know his father is dead and there could be no confusion in delivery of his mail. But follow his lead. His signature carries the "Jr."—respect his preference.

When replying to another man's letter, his signature is your guide—if you can read it. Of course, if the name seems to have been written in a wild frenzy by a contortionist, you may not be able to decipher it. However, if he is a courteous fellow and considerate of your feelings, he no doubt has his secretary solve your problem by typing the correct name underneath the spot where he intends to have his fling. Or his name may be printed on the letterhead. Otherwise, you are in for it, and can only do your best.

Other times, the letter may be going to an individual as the first contact, and only the last name is known. For such a predicament, the solution may be found in the telephone book, the city directory, *Who's Who*, or some other national compilation of names and titles. Or, it may be that someone else in the company has had previous correspondence with the same individual. It is surprising how much information the files of an organization may produce for those who will turn to them.

Accuracy in writing company names is also important, as any error indicates lack of familiarity with the company, and it may detract, in the mind of the reader, from the good impression which the writer wants to make. There is seldom any excuse for a mistake of this kind, as usually there is a letterhead available which carries the correct form.

With a letterhead before you, there is no problem. When in Rome, do as the Romans do. What you might like, if the firm were yours, is of no consequence. Your typist must type the name exactly as it is used by the company.



The variations in name forms are numerous, and that requires alertness in copying the style of each particular company. Some begin with *The*, and others do not. Some prefer abbreviations such as *Inc.*, *Corp.*, and *Co.*, and others like these words spelled out. In a sequence of surnames, some firms use a comma preceding *and*, and others omit it.

The Pierce Brokerage Company  
Union Clothing Company

Bates and Gerry, Incorporated  
John C. Featherweight, Inc.

The Dartnell Corporation  
The American Mutual Benefit Corp.

James W. Underwood Company  
The Universal Motor Co.

Baker, Jones, Brown, and Bean  
Walker, Bechtel, Doe and Flesh

When the exact form of the company or organization name is not known and there seems to be no way to check it, you may use the forms considered best. This would mean, with respect to the variations illustrated above, that you would use *The* when the rest of the name permits; spell out Incorporated, Corporation, and Company; and not use the comma between the last two names of the sequence. But these choices would endure only until the official forms became known. After that, you would properly frame the inside address to conform with company usage.

Street names should be spelled exactly as they exist, although sometimes this rule is disregarded. For example, *St. Louis* is the official form for that city, and not Saint Louis. To be sure, a few firms in that city may use the longer form in an effort to lend glamour to the name, but the practice is not to be commended.

In connection with street names there are the words which designate direction, and when space permits, they should not be abbreviated. Usually, the qualifying word appears after the number and before the generic name, but when placed last in the line it should be preceded by a comma.

999 North High Street  
3232 East Broad Street  
121 South Parkview Drive

4996 S. E. Connecticut Avenue  
(Abbreviated to conserve space)



3333 Grand Avenue, North  
237 Lindell Street, East

6543 Tchoupitoulas Street, S. W.  
(Abbreviated to conserve space)

When a street number immediately follows a house number, confusion must be avoided by one of two devices. Either the space between the numbers should be doubled, or a comma should be placed between them. Of course, there is no problem when a word standing for direction appears between the two numbers.

656 32 Street

656, 32 Street

924 East 15 Avenue

For corner addresses, it is often customary in business to use the names of the intersecting thoroughfares, omitting numbers. If both are of the same type—streets, avenues, roads—the designating word may be used only once in the plural form. If they differ in type, both of the designating words must be used.

Right: Grant and McKinley Streets  
Wrong: Grant Street and McKinley Street

Right: Lee Avenue at Clay Street  
Wrong: Lee and Clay

Earlier in this Section, pages 297 and 302, other facts related to the street address were covered. It would help to review them in connection with the material just presented.

9. *Titles.* No one has to go through life without a title, even though the three most common lack the distinction of rarity. They are, of course, *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, and *Miss*, the first two being abbreviations of *Mister* and *Mistress*. Only the abbreviations are ever used in business correspondence, but their acceptance is so wide that to omit them, when no other higher title is sanctioned, is not considered good taste.

Any man may be addressed as *Mr.*, and any woman as *Mrs.* if she is married, a widow, or a divorcee who has not gone back to the title of *Miss*. As explained previously, a married woman uses her title in connection with the full name of her husband, but a widow also has the choice of substituting her given name for that of her departed husband. If the choice is known to the letter writer, he properly complies with her wishes.



- Married: Mrs. Albert K. Kissell  
Widow: Mrs. Albert K. Kissell, or  
Mrs. Mary Anne Kissell  
Divorcee: Mrs. Mackey Kissell (husband's surname)  
Mrs. Mary Anne Mackey (maiden name)  
Miss Mary Anne Mackey (as before wedding)

The title of *Miss* is used to address a girl or older unmarried woman. It is not an abbreviation, and so requires no period. One of the problems which often confronts the business letter writer is how to address a lady when he does not know if she is single or married. He may have a letter before him, signed by "Elisabeth Long," with the designation, "Credit Department," but he has no way of telling whether her proper title is *Mrs.* or *Miss*. He decides that even if he is not correct, a single woman objects more to being addressed as *Mrs.* than does a married woman to being addressed as *Miss*. So he takes a chance on *Miss*. This reasoning is approved by the letter authorities. When you don't know and can't find out, use *Miss*.

However, a little better co-operation on the part of the feminine workers in business would go a long way toward removing the problem. Thus, it might be insisted by a business executive that any lady writing letters for his company should use *Miss* or *Mrs.* in connection with her signature. Instead, the situation is sometimes encountered where a woman in business is allowed to sign only her initials and surname. Thus, a customer might write letters over a long period of time to B. L. Garner, and never realize that this company representative wore skirts, and that the initials stood for Betty Louise. This is hardly fair to either party, as the customer in his letters might say things not appropriate for the feminine sex.

- Questionable: B. L. Garner (a woman)  
Better: Betty L. Garner (but confusing)  
Best: (Mrs.) B. L. Garner  
(Miss) Betty L. Garner

Titles belonging to a man do not carry over to the use of his wife, and are not to be combined with *Mrs.* in the outside or inside address of a business letter.

- Wrong: Mrs. Professor J. B. Maynard  
Mrs. Dr. Wayne Brooks  
Mrs. Reverend George Rook



Right: Mrs. J. B. Maynard  
 Mrs. Wayne Brooks  
 Mrs. George Rook

Women should be addressed by titles other than *Mrs.* or *Miss* only when they themselves hold right to them. For example, a woman may be addressed properly as *Dr.* if she has been awarded a doctor's degree by a university in such branches of knowledge as law (LL.D), Divinity (D.D.), medicine (M.D.), or philosophy (Ph.D.).

In the same way, women may hold many other titles, along with men—all to be recognized in addressing business letters, or those for other purposes. Thus, when the right exists, a woman may be addressed as *Professor*, *Dean*, *Honorable*, *Reverend*, or by any of the business designations, such as *President*, *Treasurer*, *Director*, *Manager*, or *Superintendent*. While women are not found in all of the positions of rank held by men, for example, President of the United States, nor in equal numbers, the same forms of address and salutation are used, with two exceptions. One is the substitution of the word *Madam* for *Sir* and *Mr.*, and the second, the avoiding of masculine terms such as *Congressman* and *Assemblyman*. Of course, most of these changes are necessary in the greetings rather than the addresses.

#### *Inside Address*

The Honorable John L. Doe,  
 The House of Representatives,  
 Washington, D. C.

The Honorable Clara B. Jones,  
 The House of Representatives,  
 Washington, D. C.

#### *Salutation*

Sir:  
 Dear Sir:  
 My dear Congressman:

Madam:  
 Dear Madam:  
 Dear Representative Jones:

It will greatly simplify your understanding of titles and their uses if you will think of them with respect to the major groups into which they may be classified. The rules for each group are limited by tradition and custom, so that modern letter writers are forced to obey conventions and formalities which are a hindrance to the general objective of making every letter a natural, man-to-man contact. If some of these old threads could be cut, without in any way ignoring the demands of courtesy or lessening respect for authority, it would be a step forward in business correspondence. Probably the trend is already moving in that direction, but it may be many years before convention will permit any person to be addressed in the first line as "Mr. John Doe," followed in the second



by a simple statement of his position or rank. Should this ever come to pass, it will not decrease the prestige of any person of importance, as public respect is surely created more by performance than by the mere bleating of titles or the insistence on forms handed down from the past.

Until that much to be desired day, there are forms which need to be followed for the inside address and salutation, and persons who violate them are open to the accusation of ignorance or disrespect. In general, persons of rank fall into one of several groups including: the Military—Army and Navy; the Governmental—National, State, and Municipal; the Judicial; the Educational; the Clergy; the Diplomatic Service, local and abroad; the Nobility; and those of Business. Each of these groups has its own set of conventions, and some are characterized by key words, such as “Doctor,” “Reverend,” “Honorable,” and “Esquire”—as previously noted in the discussion of abbreviations. In each case, an agreement in style exists between the inside address and the salutation, so that the letter writer needs to survey both of them in his effort to inform himself as to what are the correct forms for each situation.

Following the review of facts pertaining to the salutation, you will find a comprehensive glossary of positions of rank with the approved forms that may be used in both the inside address and salutation. When in doubt you can refer to this list with confidence, since it represents, as nearly as could be possible, the combined opinions of the leading authorities.

## 6. *Salutation and Complimentary Close*

*The Salutation.* When you walk into a man's office, come down to the breakfast table, or meet an acquaintance on the street, your natural impulse is to extend some form of greeting. You say, “Good morning,” or “Hello,” or “How do you do?” and the other person would consider you rude if you didn't.

This is exactly what happens in the business letter when you dictate the salutation. You are greeting the other party, before starting the message to be presented in the body of the letter. The ice is broken, and your reader sits back to see what you have to say.

Unfortunately, the greetings used in business letters are not nearly as natural or friendly as those used in personal contacts. Instead, they have been so standardized by custom, in stiff and stilted forms, that little warmth is left in them. This is especially true of the salutations considered proper for persons of rank. They are cut and dried, and serve no good purpose except to satisfy the demands of established custom. To omit them would be called an



act of discourtesy and might offend the "bigwigs" to whom the letters are addressed, yet few writers feel that they add in any way to what they are trying to accomplish.

For this reason, no doubt, a revolution against the salutation has been under way for several years in certain business organizations, including some of our largest companies. They have gone so far as to omit entirely the salutation in their letters, and most of the pioneers who have led this crusade will tell you that there has been no loss of goodwill or effectiveness as a result of the bold departure. Whether or not the idea of this omission appeals to you is beside the question. At least, it is at work in business circles, and you should know about it. The number seems definitely to be increasing, too.

For example, the salutation is not used in letters mailed from the Customers' Department of the Peoples Gas Company in Chicago, one of the nation's largest utilities. Instead, the reader's name is used in the first sentence of each letter, with a tone of cordiality which more than takes the place of the missing salutation. Thus, these "Gasco" letters begin: "Yes, indeed, Mrs. Leary, we will be glad to turn on the gas for you at your new home next Saturday," or "Thanks, Mrs. Bailey, for your letter about the April bill," or "As you requested, Mr. Gordon, we are enclosing an itemized list of your gas bills for last year." These sentences, we think, do a better job in getting the letters started pleasantly, than would the conventional salutations of "Dear Sir," or "Dear Madam," or "Dear Mrs. Bailey." After all, the letters of this company have been remarkably successful in building customer goodwill, although no one can say how much the omission of the salutation has contributed to that accomplishment.

How does a business letter look without a salutation? Well, like this:

July 6, 1947.

Mrs. James C. Wood,  
4961 South Wabash Avenue,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Yes, you are right. Your check for \$5.86 paid in full your bills for July and August. You owe us nothing, Mrs. Wood.

We want you to know that we have appreciated having you as a customer, and we hope you will enjoy your new home in Joliet.

Should you later return to Chicago, we will be happy to have the privilege of serving you again. Your credit will remain very good with us, for you have been very prompt in meeting every obligation.

Sincerely yours,



Would the omission of the salutation in such a friendly letter make any difference in its reception by the customer? Frankly, the answer to that question is a matter of opinion. You may make your own conclusion.

In the meantime, consider the various aspects of the salutation, as it is still commonly used in American business letters.

1. *Position.* The salutation should be typed two or more spaces below the last line of the inside address; it helps to establish the left-hand margin of the letter. The preferred number of spaces is two, since otherwise the inside address seems to dangle apart from the rest of the letter. However, when window envelopes are used it is sometimes expedient to increase the number of spaces, and the same device is used by some letter writers for very short letters. The great majority, however, favor the one-space separation, and it probably results in the best appearance. For those letters where the inside address is placed below the body, the salutation is typed several spaces below the date line, but of course on the left side of the page. The actual number of spaces depends on the length of the letter and the judgment of the typist or her superior.

2. *Content.* The salutation may be singular or plural, depending on the nature of the first line of the inside address. It should be singular if the letter is sent to one individual, and plural if to a company, organization, a box number, any group such as a board of directors or a committee, or to more than one individual.

The most common plural forms are *Gentlemen* and *Mesdames* or *Ladies*. The first word, of course, is used in letters going to companies, or associated persons, as a committee or partnership, where the heads are either all men, or a combination of men and women. The other two words, are used when the company or group consists entirely of women. When there is any doubt as to an all-women cast, the masculine word should be used.

In military and official correspondence, but preferably in no other kind, *Sir* or *Sirs* is a correct salutation. It is a very formal and uninviting greeting and has nothing at all to recommend it for business letters, not even when combined with *Dear* or *My Dear*.

Obviously, a letter to a company or group is more formal in nature than one to an individual, and for the latter considerably more freedom is allowed in choosing the appropriate salutation; the selection will depend on previous relationships between writer and reader and the contents of the message, which may be "strictly business," or semi-personal. In today's business correspondence, salutations run a wide gamut from formal to personal, and the only problem is that of using the one which best fits the particular situation.



This range in choice for salutations to an individual runs from "cold to warm," and covers a lot of ground, but the following are typical:

Sir:	My dear Blake:
My dear Sir:	Dear Blake:
Dear Sir:	My dear Carl:
My dear Mr. Blake:	Dear Carl:
Dear Mr. Blake:	

Another form not often seen, but one which seems to have an added warmth, is that in which both given and surname are used—"My dear Carl Blake." Then there are the other more personal forms allowable only when the relationship is very friendly, and of long standing. Among them are:

Dear friend:	Hello, Carl:
Dear friend Carl:	Thanks, Carl:
Good morning, Carl:	Right you are, Carl:

Because of the extreme informality, the salutations just mentioned are only a sample of the many variations which these non-traditional greetings may take. On the whole, their use is dangerous, and for that reason not recommended for every-day business correspondence. On the other hand, they do come closer to the greetings exchanged in speech, and when appropriate they help to make the letter a personal contact.

Salutations to ladies follow the same pattern as those for men. In the order of decreasing formality, they include:

Madam:	{ Dear Mrs. Blake:
My dear Madam:	{ Dear Miss Blake:
Dear Madam:	My dear Phyllis:
{ My dear Mrs. Blake:	Dear Phyllis:
{ My dear Miss Blake:	

For some reason hard to explain, the form "My dear," followed by the name, is more commonly used in letters to women than in letters to men. For the latter, the "Dear" without the "My" seems to be more popular.

When the title *Dr.* is used in the salutation, it takes the place of *Mr.* The same is true of *Professor* or its abbreviation. Otherwise, letters to doctors or professors run the same gamut of decreasing formality, except that the more personal forms of greeting seem to be used less frequently—perhaps because some writers are awed in approaching men of such importance.



My dear Sir:	My dear Sir:
Dear Sir:	Dear Sir:
My dear Dr. Battin:	My dear Professor Roe:
Dear Dr. Battin:	Dear Professor Roe:
My dear Fred:	My dear Emanuel:
Dear Fred:	Dear Emanuel:

The words, *Honorable*, *Reverend*, and *Esquire*, are not used in the salutation, even though they appear in the inside address. If he holds a doctor's degree, a clergyman with the title of *Reverend* should be addressed as *Dr.* in the salutation. If he does not hold a degree, the proper word is *Mr.* The use of a clergyman's surname with *Dear* or *My dear* is not considered good taste. Do not say in the salutation, *Dear Worthsbey* or *My dear Worthsbey*. When the relationship is extremely personal, however, you may correctly address the clergyman by his first name—*Dear Harold* or *My dear Harold*.

My dear Sir:	{ Dear Dr. Worthsbey:
Dear Sir:	{ Dear Mr. Worthsbey:
{ My dear Dr. Worthsbey:	My dear Harold:
{ My dear Mr. Worthsbey:	Dear Harold:

For *Esquire*, substitute *Mr.* in the salutation. Thus, the proper form is *Dear Mr. Mills*, and not *Dear Esq. Mills* or *Dear Esquire*. In connection with the last mentioned error, it should be noted that no title should be used in a salutation without the surname. It is just as wrong to say, *Dear Doctor*, *Dear Reverend*, or *My dear Professor*. Use, instead,

Dear Doctor Merkle:  
 Dear Reverend Harms:  
 My dear Professor Pate:

Occasionally, business letter writers omit *Dear* or *My dear* in the salutation, and simply use the reader's name and title—*Mr. John Baker* or *Dr. Arthur Jones*; even the first name is sometimes omitted—*Mr. Baker* or *Dr. Jones*. Since the authorities disapprove the practice, you cannot afford to copy it, but it is easy to understand the motive. One of the great inconsistencies in all forms of correspondence, and especially in that for business purposes, is the use of the word *Dear* in any of the common forms. It is, for example, hard to justify a word of affection in a greeting from one business man to another. John Bates and Oscar Prine may never have met, and yet Mr. Bates says to his secretary, "Take a letter to Oscar



Prine . . . *Dear Mr. Prine.*" Credit Manager Albert Smith writes to a customer that his patience is exhausted, and that unless a check is soon forthcoming legal action will be taken. But he still says, "*Dear Sir.*" The clerk in a mail order house writes to a woman in North Dakota, and though he knows her not, he says, "*Dear Mrs. Malstrom.*"

You can see that custom has sanctioned a word which logically has no place in impersonal contacts. Perhaps eventually this fact will be recognized, and those who now defy the authorities by refusing to use the word will be hailed as worthy pioneers. Perhaps! We hardly think it ever will be so; therefore, you may continue to use the term until the experts frown upon it.

In the salutation of a business letter it is not permissible to substitute a designation of rank or position for a name, title, or for both. A similar designation after the name of the individual is also taboo

Wrong: Dear Comptroller:  
My dear Mr. Comptroller:  
Dear Comptroller Williams:

Right: Dear Mr. Williams:

Wrong: Dear Mr. Williams, Comptroller:  
My dear Mr. Lait, President:  
Dear Mrs. Brown, D.A.R.:

Right: Dear Mr. Williams:  
My dear Mrs. Brown:

Some authorities object to the salutation, *Dear Friend*, but under certain circumstances, your author sees no objection to it. If the man to whom you are writing *is* a friend, why not address him as such? Certainly, the use of the word cannot be as illogical as that of *Dear*. Moreover, it does not stretch the imagination too greatly to think of even a customer as a friend, and for some form letters to customers of long standing, the term does not seem too far-fetched or unreasonable.

3. *Abbreviations.* The only titles that may properly be abbreviated in the salutation are *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, and *Dr.* Particularly offensive are such contractions as *Gents.* for *Gentlemen*, or in lesser degree, *D'r* for *Doctor*. We can think of no better way for a letter-writer to label himself as an ignoramus, than to address a company or group as "*Dear Gents,*" although now and then this monstrosity is met in business correspondence. The title *Messrs.* or the feminine version *Mmes.* should not be used as a salutation, or as any part of one.



Wrong: Messrs.:  
Mmes.:

Messrs. Bailey and Bailey:  
Mmes. Helen Rupert, Inc.:

Right: Gentlemen:  
Ladies:

4. *Capitalization.* There are four things to remember in connection with capitalization in the salutation of a business letter. Always use capitals for: *Sir* and *Madam*, given names and surnames, titles, and the first word.

A *don't* for good measure is that the word "dear" is never capitalized unless it starts the line.

Wrong: My Dear Miss Jones:

Right: Dear Miss Jones:

## ADDRESS AND SALUTATION FORMS

### FOR INDIVIDUALS OF RANK

(When two or more forms are suggested for the same title, they are listed in the order of decreasing formality. To complete address, the street and number, and the names of city and state, need to be added.)

#### *Abbot*

The Right Reverend Abbot Denn,  
O.S.B. (or other initials of the  
Order)

Right Reverend and dear Abbot:

Dear Father Abbot:

#### *Admiral, Full, Fleet*

The Admiral of the Navy of the  
United States

Dear Sir:

Dear Admiral Doe:

Admiral Jonathan Doe  
Chief of Naval Operations

#### *Alderman*

Alderman James B. Noon

Dear Sir:

Dear Alderman Noon:

#### *Ambassador (American)*

His Excellency  
The American Ambassador  
to Great Britain

Sir:

Your Excellency:



The American Embassy  
London, England

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

The Honorable Carl Reid  
The American Ambassador  
to Great Britain

*Ambassador (Foreign)*

His Excellency  
The Ambassador of the French  
Republic  
French Embassy  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

Excellency:

Your Excellency:

His Excellency  
M. René Lenoir  
Ambassador of the French  
Republic

*Archbishop*

Most Reverend Albert B. Dean

Your Excellency:

Your Grace:

*Archdeacon*

The Venerable the Archdeacon of  
Philadelphia

Venerable Sir:

The Venerable Woodson Ware,  
Archdeacon of Philadelphia

*Assemblyman*

The Honorable Walter B. Goon  
Member of Assembly

Dear Sir:

My dear Mr. Goon:

Assemblyman Walter B. Goon

Dear Mr. Goon:

*Assistant Secretary (Cabinet)*

The Assistant Secretary of the  
War Department

Sir:

(My) Dear Sir:

The Honorable Russell C. Doe  
Assistant Secretary of the War  
Department

My dear Mr. Doe:

Dear Mr. Doe:

(Never Mr. Secretary:)



*Associate Justice of the Supreme Court*

The Honorable William H. Black  
Associate Justice of the Supreme  
Court

Sir:

Mr. Justice:

The Honorable William H. Black  
Justice, Supreme Court of the  
United States

Your Honor:

My dear Mr. Justice:

Mr. William H. Black  
United States Supreme Court

My dear Justice Black:

Dear Justice Black:

*Attorney General*

(See Cabinet Officer)

*Baron*

The Lord Scarborough

Sir:

Dear Lord Scarborough:

*Baroness*

The Lady Scarborough

Madam:

Dear Lady Scarborough:

*Baronet:*

Sir James Kinsman, Bart.

Sir:

*Bishop (Methodist)*

The Reverend Bishop Carl Crew  
Bishop of the Eastern Area

Dear Sir:

My dear Bishop Crew:

Dear Bishop Crew:

*Bishop (Protestant Episcopal)*

The Right Reverend Samuel  
Seabury  
Bishop of Cleveland

Right Reverend and dear Sir:

My dear Bishop Seabury:

*Bishop (Roman Catholic)*

The Most Reverend James  
Bartley  
Bishop of Baltimore

Your Excellency:

My dear Bishop:

The Most Reverend Bishop  
Bartley



*Bishop (Anglican)*

The Right Reverend the Lord  
Bishop of (name of bishopric)

My Lord Bishop:

My Lord:

The Lord Bishop of (name of  
bishopric)

*Bishop (Scottish)*

The Right Reverend Bishop  
James B. McPherson

Right Reverend Sir:

*Brigadier General*

Brigadier General  
Arthur C. Candleman

Dear Sir.

Dear General Candleman:

*Cabinet Officer*

The Honorable the Secretary of  
Agriculture (or War, State,  
Commerce, etc.)

Sir:

Dear Sir:

The Honorable the Postmaster  
General (or Attorney General)

Dear (My dear) Mr. Secretary:  
(Postmaster General, Attorney  
General)

*Cadet*

Cadet Harrison Slagle

Dear Sir:

Dear Cadet Slagle:

Dear Mr. Slagle:

*Canon*

The Very Reverend Canon  
Walter Woodsberl

Very Reverend Canon:

My dear (or Dear) Canon  
Woodsberl:

The Very Reverend Walter  
Canon Woodsberl

*Captain*

Captain William Fahnestock  
United States Army (or Navy or  
Marine Corps)

Dear Sir:

Dear Captain Fahnestock:

*Cardinal*

His Eminence, Frank, Cardinal  
Cantell

Your Eminence:

His Eminence Cardinal Cantell

My Lord Cardinal:  
(to those of foreign countries)



*Cardinal (if also Archbishop)*

His Eminence the Cardinal,  
Archbishop of Baltimore

Your Eminence:

His Eminence Cardinal Smythe,  
Archbishop of Baltimore

*Chargé d'Affaires*

The Chargé d'Affaires of Mexico

Sir:

Mr. Salico Gonzoles  
Chargé d'Affaires

Dear Sir:

John Shrewsbury, Esquire  
Chargé d'Affaires

My dear Mr. Gonzoles:  
(or use title if there is one—hereditary, military, or naval)

*Chief Justice of the United States*

The Honorable John W. Bates  
Chief Justice of the Supreme  
Court of the United States

Sir:

Chief Justice Bates  
United States Supreme Court

Mr. Chief Justice:

My dear Mr. Justice:

The Chief Justice of the United  
States

Dear Justice Bates:

*Chief of Police*

Frank Minton  
Chief of Police

Dear Sir:

Dear Chief Minton:

*Clergyman*

The Reverend Donald Beard  
Reverend Dr. Donald Beard  
(If Doctor of Divinity)

Reverend Sir:

My dear Sir:

My dear Mr. Beard:

Dear Mr. Beard:

Dear Dr. Beard:

*Clerk of the House (or Senate)*

The Honorable James Pierce  
Clerk of the House (or Senate)

Dear Sir:

My dear Mr. Pierce:

Dear Mr. Pierce:



*Colonel*

Colonel Gerard B. Goodman  
United States Army (or Marine  
Corps)

Dear Sir:

Dear Colonel Goodman:

(The salutation to an army officer below the rank of Captain should not refer to his title. Use *Mr.*)

*Commander*

Commander B. C. Winters  
United States Navy

Dear Sir:

Dear Commander Winters:

*Commissioner of a Bureau*

The Honorable William Dorset  
Commissioner of the Bureau of  
Education  
Department of Interior

Sir:

Dear Sir:

My dear Mr. Dorset:

*Comptroller of the Currency*

The Honorable Robert C. Roberts  
Comptroller of the Currency

Sir:

Dear Sir:

My dear Mr. Roberts:

*Congressman*

The Honorable Howard Reamer  
House of Representatives

Sir:

Dear Sir:

The Honorable Howard Reamer  
Representative in Congress  
(When away from Washington)

My dear Congressman Reamer:

Dear Representative Reamer:

Representative Howard Reamer  
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Reamer:

*Congresswoman*

The Honorable Clara O. Booth  
House of Representatives

Dear Madam:

Dear Representative Booth:

The Honorable Clara O. Booth  
Representative in Congress  
(When away from Washington)

My dear Miss Booth:

Representative Clara O. Booth  
House of Representatives



*Consul*

Mr. Richard D. Mann  
 Consul of the United States of  
 America

Dear Sir:

Dear Mr. Consul:

My dear Mr. Mann:

*Corporal*

Corporal Charles Hayes  
 United States Army or  
 United States Marine Corps

Dear Sir:

Dear Mr. Hayes:

*Countess*

The Countess of Sheffield

Madam:

Dear Lady Sheffield:

*Dean (Ecclesiastical)*

The Very Reverend the Dean of  
 St. Joseph's

Sir:

Very Reverend Sir:

The Very Reverend Dean  
 George Conant

Very Reverend Father:  
 (Roman Catholic)

*Dean (Graduate School or College)*

Dean Casper Millwright  
 School of Commerce

Dear Sir:

Dear Dean Millwright:

*Diplomat*

(See Ambassador, Chargé d'Affaires, Minister. For diplomats of lower rank, use the common forms of address, unless they have military, naval, or hereditary titles.)

*Duchess*

The Duchess of Ashleigh

Madam:

Dear Duchess of Ashleigh:

*Duke*

The Duke of Ashleigh

Sir:

Dear Duke of Ashleigh:

*Earl*

The Earl of Scofield

Sir:

Dear Lord Scofield:



*Ensign*

Ensign E. W. Brown  
United States Navy

Dear Sir:

Dear Mr. Brown:

*Envoy*

(See Minister, Diplomatic)

*General*

General Henry S. Hatch  
United States Army

Sir:

Dear Sir:

Dear General Hatch:

*Governor*

His Excellency  
The Governor of Ohio

Your Excellency:

Sir:

The Honorable the Governor of  
Ohio

Dear Sir:

The Honorable John W. Bricker  
Governor of Ohio

My dear Governor Bricker:

*Judge*

The Honorable Harold Lemming  
United States District Judge

Dear Sir:

Dear Judge Lemming:

The Honorable Amy O'Neil  
Judge of the Circuit Court

Dear Madam:

Dear Judge O'Neil:

*Knight*

Sir James Parkersdam

Sir:

Dear Sir James:

*Lawyer*

Mr. Carl Benbow  
Attorney at Law

Dear Sir:

My dear Mr. Benbow:

Dear Mr. Benbow:

*Lieutenant*

Lieutenant Ralph Maloney  
United States Army (or Navy)

Dear Sir:

Dear Mr. Maloney:



*Lieutenant Colonel*

Lieutenant Colonel John Beam  
United States Army (or Marine  
Corps)

Dear Sir:

Dear Colonel Beam:

(Omit the *Lieutenant* in the Salutation.)

*Lieutenant Commander*

Lieutenant Commander  
C. O. Blue  
United States Navy

Dear Sir:

Dear Mr. Blue:

(The salutation to a naval officer of or below the rank of Lieutenant Commander should not refer to his title. Use *Mr.*)

*Lieutenant General*

Lieutenant General Casey Shea

Dear Sir:

Dear General Shea:

(Omit the *Lieutenant* in the Salutation.)

*Lieutenant Governor*

The Honorable Hiram B. Snooks  
Lieutenant Governor of Arizona

Sir:

Dear Sir:

My dear Mr. Snooks:

*Major*

Major Robert C. Wolling  
United States Army

Dear Sir:

Dear Major Wolling:

*Major General*

Major General T. T. Thaad  
United States Army

Dear Sir:

Dear General Thaad:

(Omit the *Major* in the Salutation.)

*Marchioness*

Marchioness of Huntleigh

Madam:

Dear Lady Huntleigh:

*Marquis*

The Marquis of Huntleigh

Sir:

Dear Lord Huntleigh:



*Master in Chancery*

Honorable Hugo B. Bauman  
Master in Chancery of the Circuit  
Court

Dear Sir:

Dear Judge Bauman:

*Mayor*

The Mayor of the City of Chicago

Sir:

The Honorable Anton J. Kelly  
Mayor of the City of Chicago

Dear Sir:

My dear Mr. Mayor:

Dear Mayor Kelly:

*Midshipman*

Midshipman E. C. Obear  
United States Navy

Dear Sir:

Dear Mr. Obear:

*Minister (Diplomatic)*

The Spanish Minister  
The Spanish Legation  
Washington, D. C.

Your Excellency:

Sir:

His Excellency A. B. Coe  
Minister of the United States of  
America  
Madrid, Spain

My dear Mr. Minister:

*Minister (Religious)*

(See Clergyman; Priest; Rabbi)

*Monk*

(See Priest)

*Monsignor*

The Right Reverend  
Monsignor Malcomb McComb

The Right Reverend and dear  
Monsignor:

The Right Reverend Monsignor  
Malcomb McComb:

My dear Monsignor McComb:

*Mother Superior*

The Reverend Mother Superior  
Convent of the Sacred Heart

Reverend Mother:

Dear Madam:

Mother Mary Louise, Superior  
Convent of the Sacred Heart

My dear Reverend Mother:



**Reverend Mother Mary Louise**  
(Plus initials of the order)

**Dear Mother Mary Louise:**

*Nun*

**Sister Mary Angelica**

**Reverend Sister:**

**Dear Sister Mary Angelica:**

*Pope*

**His Holiness Pope Pius XII**

**Most Holy Father:**

**Your Holiness:**

*Postmaster General*

**See Cabinet Officer)**

*President (College or University)*

**President Robert Lee Jones**  
**Ohio University**

**Dear Sir:**

**My dear President Jones:**

**Robert Lee Jones LL.D.**  
**President, Ohio University**  
(Use initials of only the highest  
degree, unless in different fields)

**Very Reverend Robert Lee Jones**  
**Loyola University**  
(If a Catholic College)

**Very Reverend and dear Father:**

*President (State Senate)*

**The Honorable John Doe,**  
**President**  
**The Senate of Oklahoma**

**Sir:**

*President (United States Senate)*

**The Honorable the President of**  
**the Senate of the United States**

**Sir:**

**The Honorable James J. James**  
**President of the Senate**  
**Washington, D. C.**

*President of the United States*

**The President of the United States**

**Sir:**

**The President**  
**The White House**

**My dear Mr. President:**

**Dear Mr. President:**



## *Priest (Roman Catholic)*

The Reverend Father Harold Harms (Plus initials of the Order)	Reverend Father:  Dear Father Harms:
---	--

(Above are regular forms; note exceptions below.)

## *Benedictine, Cistercian, or Canon Regular*

The Very Reverend Dom Harold Harms (Plus initials of the Order)	Reverend Father:  Dear Father Harms:
---	--

## *Carthusian*

The Venerable Father Harold Harms, O. Cart.	Venerable Father:  Dear Father Harms:
--	---

## *Secular*

The Reverend Harold Harms (Plus initials of the Order)	Reverend Sir:  Dear Sir:  Dear Father Harms:
---	--

## *Priest (Episcopal)*

Reverend Hector M. Heath	Dear Father Heath:
--------------------------	--------------------

## *Professor*

Mr. Robert C. Wilcox	Dear Sir:
Professor Robert C. Wilcox	Dear Professor Wilcox:
Dr. Robert C. Wilcox (If he holds the degree)	Dear Dr. Wilcox:
The Reverend Professor Harold D. Esper	My dear Sir:  Dear Professor Esper:
The Reverend Harold D. Esper D.D. (If he holds the degree)	

## *Rabbi*

Rabbi Jacob Solomon	Reverend Sir:
The Reverend Jacob Solomon	Dear Sir:
Dr. Jacob Solomon	My dear Rabbi Solomon:  Dear Doctor Solomon:



*Representative*

(See Congressman)

*Secretary of Agriculture, Commerce,  
War, etc.*

(See Cabinet Officer)

*Secretary to the President*

The Honorable John Doe  
Secretary to the President  
The White House

Sir:

Dear Sir:

Dear Mr. Doe:

*Senator (United States or State)*

Senator Alvin E. Tobin  
  
The Honorable Alvin E. Tobin  
United States Senate

Sir:

Dear Sir:

My dear Senator Tobin:

The Honorable Luther Mack  
Senate of North Carolina

Dear Senator Mack:

*Sergeant*

Sergeant Terry McGuire  
U. S. Army or  
U. S. Marine Corps

Dear Sir:

Dear Mr. McGuire:

*Sister of Religious Order*

The Reverend Sister Mary Louise  
  
Sister Mary Louise  
(Plus initials of Order)

My dear Sister:

Dear Sister Mary Louise:

*Speaker of the House*

The Honorable the Speaker  
House of Representatives  
  
The Honorable William Potts  
Speaker of the House of Repre-  
sentatives

Dear Sir:

My dear Mr. Speaker:

Dear Mr. Speaker:

*Undersecretary of State*

The Undersecretary of State  
  
The Honorable Ralph Richey  
Undersecretary of State

Sir:

Dear Sir:

My dear Mr. Richey:



*Vice Admiral and Rear Admiral*

Vice Admiral Carl Garner  
 Rear Admiral John Case  
 United States Navy

Dear Sir:

Dear Admiral Garner:

Dear Admiral Case:

*Vice-Consul*

(Same forms as Consul)

*Vice President of the United States*

The Vice President  
 Washington, D. C.

Sir:

My dear Mr. Vice President:

The Honorable John Doe  
 Vice President of the United  
 States

Dear Mr. Vice President:

Dear Mr. Doe:

*Viscount*

The Viscount Huntleigh

Sir:

Dear Lord Huntleigh:

*Viscountess*

The Viscountess Huntleigh

Madam:

Dear Lady Huntleigh:

Note: The above list includes positions of rank most likely to confront the business letter-writer, but it is not intended to be complete. When two or more forms of address are suggested for the same person of title, any one of them may be accepted as correct. The suggested salutations are only those most commonly used. Any of them are correct, but the more informal ones are recommended.

*The Complimentary Close.* It is not difficult to understand why below the body of practically all business letters there is added the phrase rather aptly called the "Complimentary Close." That's exactly what it is—a parting gesture from the writer of the letter to his reader. Just as you feel the impulse to end a conversation with "Good-by now" or "Thanks a lot," so does a letter seem to require some similar courtesy to avoid too abrupt an ending—"Yours very truly," "Sincerely yours," or one of the other commonly used expressions.

With the motive for the custom there can be no serious objection, since anything that might tend to humanize a letter-contact must be accepted as quite worthwhile and desirable. But when you



remember that the same set of stock phrases are used over and over millions of times every year, you must concede that the complimentary close adds very little warmth to a business letter. It is simply another of the conventions which has come down from the past, and is quite likely to persist for no better reason than "this is the way we've always done it."

To prove that the complimentary close is merely a convention to be taken as a matter of course, like the tipping of your hat to a lady, try to remember which of the customary phrases was used in the very last business letter that came to your attention. Was it "Yours very truly," "Cordially yours," or just *what* was it? Probably you haven't the slightest idea what the words were, and that is no reflection on your memory. It was there, as you would expect it to be, but you paid no attention to it. We think that is what happens ninety-nine times out of a hundred when business letters are read. The complimentary close is taken for granted, and adds nothing to the message in the body of the letter.

Does this mean that the practice might just as well be discontinued? Well, it has been by some companies, and those responsible tell us there has been no criticism from those receiving the letters. The reason is possibly that business-contacts are less likely to be formal and traditional than in other fields of human relations. The business man, writing to customers and prospects, is less bound by custom than he would be if writing to a high government official or to some other important individual of title.

However, the complimentary close is commonly accepted as a necessary part of the business letter, and so long as the majority of our companies continue to use it, you must understand the rules which govern its form and content as approved by the authorities for different letter situations. Certainly, we do recommend that when choice is offered between the formal and informal forms, that you use the latter.

This leaning toward informality in the complimentary close is strictly in keeping with the modern trend with respect to other aspects of the business letter—the turning away from the old-fashioned stilted phrases, the growing preference for the more intimate forms of salutation, and the general effort to write as we *talk*. Already, the most extreme formal forms of the complimentary close, as seen in the letters of our forefathers, have passed into the letter limbo. We no longer encounter letters ending with "Your obedient servant," "Yours faithfully, Sir," or those other equally cold and exaggerated forms so common in the past.

1. *Position on page.* Usually, the complimentary close is typed two spaces below the last line of the body of the letter, but there is



no hard-fast rule that it must be in exactly that position. On the contrary, when the letter is very short, a better appearance may be gained by dropping the complimentary close a greater number of spaces. When this is done, however, more space should be allowed for separating the other parts of the letter, as otherwise the complimentary close would seem to dangle alone and remote from the rest of the structure.

The line ordinarily starts a few spaces to the left of the vertical center of the page, and in that position it tends to balance best with the inside address at the top. Here again, the choice of the starting point depends more on the judgment of the typist or dictator, than on any rule that says where it must be marked. You have noted, perhaps, the practice followed by some letter-men of starting the complimentary close in line with the left-hand margin. This radical departure from the more conventional position on the right-hand side is not favored by authority, but it cannot be called an act of business discourtesy or lack of good taste. We have seen some letters typed this way that made a fine appearance, and who would be so hide-bound as to say that any new style is taboo simply because it differs from the old? The letter on the following page illustrates the point. While the position of the complimentary close may be disturbingly different because you are not accustomed to it, one must admit that the general appearance of the letter is both interesting and pleasing.

No matter what the starting place of the complimentary close, it should never extend beyond the line made by the right-hand margin.

2. *The common forms.* Although there are no rules to tell you exactly what form the complimentary close should take for a particular letter, common sense suggests that in the degree of formality it should conform with the salutation which has been selected as most appropriate for the individual who is to receive the letter. For example, in a letter to a well known business acquaintance or friend it would be absurd to greet him with "Dear Mr. Carter," or "Dear John," and then sign off with "Very respectfully yours." In like manner, it would be just as inconsistent to begin with a blunt "Sir," and then conclude with "Cordially yours." At least the latter fault is not condoned by modern practice, even though you might ask why any gentleman of high rank would object to an expression of cordiality?

As you may have guessed, your author has none too much sympathy with the inherited conventions which tend to stiffen and make unnatural the tone of a business letter. However, we must recognize that these conventions exist, and that they are followed by the





GRAND AT TENTH - DES MOINES, IOWA  
L. O. FENTON, B.A. - DIRECTOR

## American Institute of Business

FULLY ACCREDITED

Des Moines, Iowa

January 23, 1940

Mr. L. E. Frailey  
1053 North Shore Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Cy:

When I received your file on your letter writing clinics, I was rather disappointed in the puny efforts of some of those advertising geniuses.

Now I have labored and brought forth a mouse. Let me know what you think of my efforts. Of course, I don't care what you think--if it doesn't get results it won't be worth a dime.

The point is that you are to speak to the group on Wednesday morning, February 7, at nine o'clock. I hope you will rouse the Rock Island engineer and see that he gets you here on time. If there is any slip-up on this, it will be my most embarrassing situation in all the twenty-nine years of my life.

Get yourself a glass cage and stay in it until February 7.

If this clinic "clicks," it will be an annual affair.

May I have your reaction to all this activity?

Very sincerely yours,

  
DIRECTOR

MOF:LK



S. O. FENTON, B.A. - DIRECTOR  
AFFILIATED WITH AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF COMMERCE IN DAVENPORT

### COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE AND SIGNATURE BLOCKED AT LEFT

great majority of letter-writers, including even those who strive to make the body of their letters human and conversational. Hence, it is well that you should be familiar with the forms of the complimentary close which are commonly used, particularly with their respective degree of formality.

The most formal of them all are those which were used by our ancestors. Fortunately, these monstrosities have just about dis-



appeared from business correspondence, although it is surprising to note one book of high authority recommending that a letter to the President of the United States should close with, "I have the honor to remain, Sir, Your most obedient servant," the last four words being the complimentary close. Frankly, we do not think that even our President expects such servility from one of his citizens. For that reason, we do not propose to include such obsolete forms in the list below which contains, in the order of their formality, the phrases now in common use.

Very respectfully yours,  
Yours very respectfully,  
Respectfully yours,  
Yours respectfully,  
Respectfully,

Very truly yours,  
Yours very truly,  
Truly yours,  
Yours truly,

Very sincerely yours,  
Yours very sincerely,  
Sincerely yours,  
Yours sincerely,  
Sincerely,

Very cordially yours,  
Yours very cordially,  
Cordially yours,  
Yours cordially,  
Cordially,

The above list includes all of the forms recommended by the authorities, but they shut their eyes to many variations which are seen every day in business correspondence. Some are the more intimate forms used by business friends, and others are suggested by special occasions. For example, here are a few typical ones taken from incoming mail.

Best regards,  
Yours with appreciation,  
Gratefully yours,  
Always a Buckeye,  
Yours for Bricker,  
Bottoms up, Cy,  
Your Texas friend,

While we realize that these forms may be too personal for general use, there can surely be no harm in them when a friendly relationship exists between writer and recipient. In fact, they have a human touch which would be entirely lacking in any of the old cut-and-dried forms. Why shouldn't a business acquaintance with whom there had been a discussion of Mr. Bricker's qualifications for President, close his letter with the phrase, "Yours for Bricker"? If one man has done a favor for another, why shouldn't the latter end his thank-you letter with "Yours with appreciation"? "The complimentary close," writes one of the best authorities, "is to a



business letter what the expression 'Good-by' is to a conversation." All right, agreed! Then why not make it *conversational*? Not in all letters! Unfortunately, no. If the letter goes to a stranger, to a mere acquaintance, to someone of higher rank, then drag out the proper formality. But there are many occasions in business, when we can be as natural in saying "Good-by" as we would be in speech.

3. *Rules to remember.* Following are facts about the complimentary close that the business letter-writer needs to know.

(a) Capitalize the first word only.

Wrong: Yours Very Respectfully,

Right: Yours very respectfully,

(b) The last word should be followed with a comma. Even if open punctuation is used for other units of the letter, the comma should be used.

(c) Do not abbreviate in the complimentary close.

Wrong: Yrs. very truly,  
Respy. yrs.,  
S'e'ly yrs.,

Right: Yours very truly,  
Respectfully yours,  
Sincerely yours,

(d) "And oblige" is a throwback to early times. Avoid its use.

Mail the check this week,

And oblige,

(e) Do not confuse the word *respectfully* with *respectively*. This is so often done that it deserves the red flag signal.

Wrong: Yours respectively,

Right: Yours respectfully,

Since there is some latitude in choosing the form to be used for the complimentary close, it would be interesting to know which form or forms, if any, are the most frequently used. Perhaps a survey of fifty to a hundred thousand letters would produce an authoritative answer to this question, but so far as we know nothing of the kind has been attempted. However, for what it may be worth,



here are the forms that appear on twenty-five business letters recently received, with the writers identified as to rank or position.

<i>Complimentary Close</i>	<i>Times Used</i>	<i>Type of Executive</i>
Very sincerely yours,	1	President (1)
Very sincerely,	1	President (1)
Sincerely yours,	4	{ President (3) Sales Manager (1)
Sincerely,	4	{ Secretary (2) V. p. President (1) President (1)
Cordially yours,		{ President (2) Hotel Manager (1) Circulation Manager (1) Publisher (1)
Cordially,		{ Sales Manager (2) Circulation Manager (1) Advertising Manager (1) Editor (1)
Yours very truly,		{ Sales Manager (2) Secretary (1)
Very truly yours,		Advertising Director (1)
Faithfully yours,		President (England) (1)
Thanks a lot,		Manager of Research (1)

Although twenty-five letters are far too few to use as a basis in forming dependable deductions, the information revealed in the above list may at least point the way to more exhaustive research. Remember, too, that this batch of letters was taken at random from those of "recent date" received by one business man. It might be a fairly representative sample of what would be exposed if a far greater number of letters were examined.

Several facts seem significant. First, the twenty-five letters were all written by business men of high position. If it were true that rank and formality go hand in hand, you would expect the complimentary close in these letters to lean the formal way, but twenty-one of them use "Sincerely" and "Cordially" in one combination or another. Only four take the more formal road, ending with "Yours very truly," or "Very truly yours." One of the men is a radical—he dares to end his letter with "Thanks a lot"—and of all things, he is the Manager of Research, one whom you might expect to be the most conservative.

By now, perhaps you have discovered what appears to be an inaccuracy in the figures. There are twenty-six letters listed instead



of twenty-five. Right you are, but one doesn't count. It came from London, England, and is not representative of American letters. You seldom see "Faithfully yours," at the bottom of our letters.

Formality still rules in England. A good illustration to prove this statement is the recent experience of an American executive. He had written to an executive in London, addressing him as, "Dear Mr. Doc." In his reply, the Englishman said, "We are confident no discourtesy was intended, but perhaps inadvertently your letter to the writer was incorrectly addressed to him by name rather than the more proper form, Dear Sir." Yes, this is a true story, and it shows that even in letter-writing, one must respect custom or take the chance of being called a boor.

### *7. Signatures and Other Notations*

*The signature.* The signature on a business letter is far more important than it might seem at first thought. It not only serves to place responsibility for what has been said in the letter, but may add or detract as a factor in the general appearance of the whole ensemble. It may also be assumed that the reader has the right to know, easily and without the slightest inconvenience, to whom the signature belongs, and how it is spelled. Thus, we have the simple "must" that either the written name and initials should be legible without question of doubt, or they should be duplicated by the typist. In the latter case, the writer can have as much fun as he wants in signing his name; otherwise, the slightest inconvenience to the reader in trying to decipher a signature is inexcusable. Any thought that this comment is superfluous may be canceled by an inspection of the "cockeyed" signatures on page 339. They were taken from business letters where no other means was supplied to identify the writers—nothing on the letterheads, and no duplications in type. In each case, the writer signed his name in a way to indicate that he had just swallowed a hornet, and the reader was left to decipher the spelling as best he could.

The rules that govern the position and content of the signature are far from ironclad. They are based on prevailing custom, the will of the individual, and the practice of the company as may be ordered in the correspondence manual. Some serve a utility purpose, and others are merely a reflection of what seems to be common sense and good judgment. You are not forced to follow these rules as they are set forth below, but you cannot "go wrong" in doing so. They represent the opinion of the leading authorities, and for that reason may be accepted with confidence.

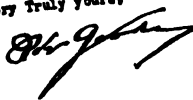
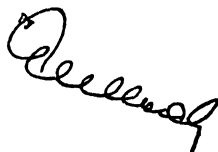




A MASSIVE sprawling signature  
 Peps up a letter, I'm quite sure:  
 Huge flourishes, though superficial,  
 Make it look much more official;  
 Crisp swirling strokes, placed here and there,  
 Denote the writer's savoir-faire;  
 Dots and doodads, smartly placed,  
 Proclaim his dignity and taste;  
 Combined, they add much snap and class  
 To correspondence, but alas!  
 They sometimes drive the reader plumb  
 Daffy, figuring who it's from!

By G. B. Walton,  
*Saturday Evening Post*

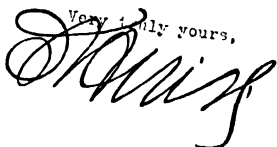
Very Truly yours,

Cordially,



Very truly yours,



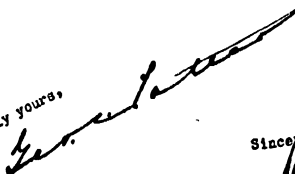

Assistant Advertising Manager

Sincerely yours,



Division Manager

Sincerely yours,



Sincerely yours,



President

Sincerely yours,



President

1. *Position.* Usually, the signature on a business letter consists of three or more lines—the name of the company, the name of the writer in longhand, and the typed copy of the writer's name, with designation of department or title. These lines are arranged in an orderly fashion, somewhat similar to those in the inside address and salutation. The best appearance is gained when no one of these lines extends far beyond the others. One line may be sufficient for name and title if both are short, or two lines may be necessary to keep the entire signature in harmonious proportion.



complimentary close, to agree with the space allowed between paragraphs and between the other letter units. However, if greater space has been allotted between these other units, the same should be true of the space between complimentary close and first line of the signature. Particular care should be taken to allow sufficient space for the longhand signature of the writer.\* It may be from three to six spaces, depending on the size of the name as it is customarily penned. Some men write with generous flourishes; others with minute precision. The typist soon learns how much space is required.

When two lines are typed consecutively, they should be single spaced for two reasons. First, to save space, and second, because they look better that way.

Not	Cordially yours,
Good	
This	The Doe Supply Company
Way	<i>Albert S. Grace</i>
	Albert S. Grace

Advertising Manager

Okay	Cordially yours,
with	
Last	The Doe Supply Company
Two	<i>Albert S. Grace</i>
Lines	Albert S. Grace
Single	Albert S. Grace
Spaced	Advertising Manager

In the opinion of most letter experts, the signature lines make the best appearance when *blocked*, starting at the same distance from the left edge of the page as does the complimentary close. In every case, this should be done when the other parts of the letter are arranged in the blocked form.

Very cordially yours,  
Caldwell Processing Co.  
*Leslie J. Caldwell*  
Leslie J. Caldwell  
Director of Personnel

This blocking of the signature is recommended, even when the other parts of the letter are indented, with the exception that the

\* All longhand signatures are shown here in italics.



lines no longer start even with the first word in the complimentary close. The one indention assures consistency with the general form of the letter.

Very cordially yours,

Caldwell Processing Co.

*Leslie J. Caldwell*

Leslie J. Caldwell

Director of Personnel

One rule for the position of the signature which should never be disregarded is that none of the lines should reach beyond the right-hand margin of the page. This creates a problem for the letter-writer and his typist when one of the lines is extremely long and cannot be broken. In such a case, the long line cannot be blocked with the rest of the signature, and still kept from stepping over the right-hand margin. Hence, some other form must be followed.

Very truly yours,

Blue Bonnet Oil Co.

*Martin T. Williams*

Martin T. Williams

Assistant Superintendent of Production

Most sincerely yours,

Larson Lithograph and Printing Company

*James C. Donovan*

James C. Donovan

Credit Manager

While neither of the above solutions to the problem of the unusually long line present the neat, orderly appearance of a pure block, they are probably as good as the circumstances will permit. As has been said, the signature rules are not ironclad, and when two of them oppose each other the best compromise must be left to the judgment of the sender.

Of course, another possible solution to the problem is the one illustrated on page 334. The unorthodox alignment of the signature with the left-hand margin, allows considerably more space for any over-stuffed line. However, without the blessing of the experts, few will dare to take this easy way out.

2. *Variations in content.* The simplest of all forms for the signature is the one in which only the pen-written name of the writer



appears. It looks best and is best, unless additional information is necessary or desired by the company. This form is also especially appropriate in correspondence between business friends; the titles, being understood, do not require repetition which would only be an indication of vanity. In such cases the writer assumes full responsibility for the message in the letter as there is no company name coupled with his own.

Yours cordially,

*John E. Doe*

Another form almost as simple is the one where the name is typed as well as pen-written. This also looks good, and is a courteous procedure when the writer knows his signature is not easily deciphered. The typed copy of the name is unnecessary if it also appears on the letterhead. The only exception to this rule is when the letterhead also contains in printed form the names of several other officials. This forces the reader to study the list of names to see which one compares most closely with the written signature—an inconvenience to which he should not be subjected. Again, since the company name does not appear in this form, the assumption is that the writer assumes responsibility in a personal way for what he has said.

Yours Cordially,

*Howard H. Wainwright*

Howard H. Wainwright

Sometimes a two-line signature consists of the pen-written name plus a typed line giving the title or department. This form is often desirable in business, as it helps the reader to understand the source of the information he has received, or the authority of the writer in supplying it. Thus, if Mrs. O'Brien has written to a mail order house about the poor performance of her new stove, she may have more confidence in the suggestions offered in the reply if it is identified as coming from the "Chief Engineer," rather than just from a name which might belong to a mere clerk whose job it was to handle any complaint. In similar fashion, a collection letter with only a name at the bottom might not carry as much weight as if that name were designated as belonging to the Treasurer. Or, a letter identified as coming from the Vice-President in Charge of Sales might make a customer feel more important than one coming from an unknown member of the Sales Department, whose position or au-



thority is not stated. You can think of many other situations where the mention of title or department strengthens the effect of a business letter.

Yours very truly,

*Oscar Bauman*

Chief Engineer

Very truly yours,

*Charles Gast*

Charles Gast, Treasurer

Sincerely yours,

*Carrie C. Goode*

Service Department

In one of the preceding examples, it was possible to place both title and typed copy of the pen-written name on the same line. But when this results in too much length, so that the signature is thrown off balance, a three-line form becomes necessary.

Yours very truly,

*Fred C. Wood*

Fred C. Wood  
Advertising Manager

Cordially yours,

*Malcomb Hennapenny Bates*

Malcomb Hennapenny Bates  
Superintendent

So far, we have inspected only the signature forms which do not include the name of the company or organization. When the latter is included, the procedure becomes more complicated. Not only are more lines usually required, but several problems present themselves with respect to the position of the company line, and just how it is to be typed. For example, note the different treatments of the following four-line signature.

(a) *Company name first*

Very truly yours,

The Cameron Rug Company

*Russell T. Geho*

Russell T. Geho  
Sales Manager



(b) *Same, all capitals*

Very truly yours,

THE CAMERON RUG COMPANY

*Russell T. Geho*

Russell T. Geho  
Sales Manager

(c) *Writer's name first*

Very truly yours,

*Russell T. Geho*

Russell T. Geho  
Sales Manager  
Cameron Rug Company

(d) *Same position but  
company name all  
capitals*

Very truly yours,

*Russell T. Geho*

Russell T. Geho  
Sales Manager  
CAMERON RUG COMPANY

These four forms for the same signature illustrate two problems. The first is where the name shall be typed, and it is inconsequential. The person in authority may decide whether or not he wants the company name to have the added display gained by all capitals. Once the decision is made, however, it should be adhered to in all departments and by all individuals. A company should develop a style for its correspondence, and not let every dictator "roll his own," which results in lack of uniformity and no style at all. Particularly is the last point true with respect to the second problem—in what position the company line shall be placed. If there seems to be a good reason for having it precede the name of the individual (examples *a* and *b*), then the form should be followed in all of the company letters.

The point of difference between the two positions is largely one of determining the responsibility for the content of the letter. If the company name is typed first, then the implication to the reader is that the company has stated the facts, and the individual who signs the letter has acted in the capacity of interpreter or transmitter. Thus, the concept of complete company responsibility gains greater emphasis than when the individual's name comes first, and he seems to speak for himself.

The question of whether or not the company name shall be used at all in the signature may be influenced by the inclination of the executive in charge of such matters, or sometimes by the more urgent factor of necessity. If the letter is typed on a blank sheet of paper, which could hardly happen in an organization of any



prestige or importance, then obviously the company name must appear in the signature, unless the subject matter is purely personal, and the writer is acting strictly for himself. In the vast majority of letter situations there is a letterhead to tell the reader plainly the source of the message. When this is true, the company name in the signature is only a repetition, and may be considered as unnecessary. The person receiving a letter on the stationery of *Blank & Blank, Inc.*, and signed by *John Doe, President*, hasn't the slightest doubt as to the identity of the organization of which Mr. Doe is the head. Neither would he question the authority to act for the company of a man who signed as Credit Manager, Sales Manager, or in any other capacity.

A signature of more than four lines does not enhance the appearance of the entire letter—in fact, it tends to have the opposite effect—but sometimes the long form is necessary. For example, this is true when both title and department need to be mentioned.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|   | Sincerely yours,  |
| (a) <i>Better balanced with company name placed first</i> | PARAMONT MOTOR COMPANY<br>Horace P. Oliver  |
|   | Horace P. Oliver<br>Assistant Superintendent<br>Used Car Department                         |
|   | Cordially yours,  |
|   | Alvin S. Fritsche   |
| (b) <i>The four consecutive lines look awkward</i>        | Alvin S. Fritsche<br>Manager Experimental Farm<br>Research Department<br>BRUNSON FEED MILLS |

So far as is reasonable and possible, the best procedure in determining signature forms is to keep them simple and short by eliminating all unnecessary information.

3. *Punctuation.* As with the date line and inside address, the punctuation of the signature may be either *open* or *closed*, but the form used must agree with the other units. Hence, the punctuation of the date line sets the style for the rest of the letter. Remember, however, that the complimentary close is *not* a part of the signature, although it teams closely with it. The complimentary close ends with a comma, no matter which of the two punctuation forms is used for the other parts. In contrast, the pen-written name of the writer has no punctuation mark following it in either form, unless an abbreviation concludes the name.



- (a) *Open punctuation*      Sincerely yours,  
McNULTY & MINTON, INC.  
*John Selby Graham*  
John Selby Graham  
Sales Manager  
Textile Division
- (b) *Closed punctuation*      Sincerely yours,  
McNULTY & MINTON, INC.,  
*John Selby Graham*  
John Selby Graham,  
Sales Manager,  
Textile Division.
- (c) *Open punctuation*      Yours very truly,  
*John Gore*  
John Gore, Secretary  
The Battin Company
- (d) *Closed punctuation*      Yours very truly,  
*John Gore*  
John Gore, Secretary,  
The Battin Company.

4. *Abbreviations.* In the preceding example (a), the word *incorporated* was abbreviated in the signature because in that form it was a part of the official company name. There can be no deviation from this rule— as the name stands on the letterhead, so must it appear in the signature. On the contrary, personal names, with certain exceptions, should not be abbreviated. The authorities do not approve such contractions as *Geo.* for *George* or *Jno.* for *John*, but there are occasions when an exception must be conceded. For example, we know of one great business leader whose first given name is *William*, but for more than fifty years he has used the contraction, *Wm.* To suggest to this individual that he should start signing his letters with the full name, *William*, would surely be the height of absurdity.

The abbreviations, *Jr.* and *Sr.* have become so standardized by common use that they also are exceptions to the rule. It is very seldom that the longer forms are ever seen in personal signatures. Approved, too, by the censors are initials, although the preference is for at least one of the given names to be spelled out. Thus, *James C. Hardy* undoubtedly has a more balanced appearance when written or typed in the signature of a business letter, than does



*J. C. Hardy.* However, if an individual prefers to use both initials, it may be considered his personal business, and no one has the right to criticize the practice.

Designations of position and departments should not be abbreviated. For example, *Advertising Manager* should never be typed *Adv. Mgr.*—*Circulation Department* should never be typed *Circ. Dept.*

5. *Capitalization.* The following rules apply to capitalization in the various signature forms.

Capitalize—

- (a) All initials, given names, and surnames.
- (b) All words designating title or position, except prepositions, conjunctions, and articles. The latter, however, should be capitalized if they begin the title or position.

Wrong: Sales manager

Director Of Personnel

Assistant to the treasurer

the Grand Marshal

Right: Sales Manager

Director of Personnel

Assistant to the Treasurer

The Grand Marshal

- (c) Abbreviations *Jr.*, *Sr.*, and *Mrs.*, and the designation *Miss*.
- (d) All words and abbreviations in the name of a company or association, except prepositions, conjunctions, and articles. The latter, however, should be capitalized when they begin the name.
- (e) All words in the names of departments, except prepositions, conjunctions, and articles. The latter, however, are capitalized if they begin the name.

Wrong: National association of real estate boards

Department of traffic control

Credit And Collection Division

Right: National Association of Real Estate Boards

Department of Traffic Control

Credit and Collection Division



6. *Signatures for women.* So that the recipient of a letter may address his reply properly, he should not be left in doubt as to the sex or marital status of the correspondent. The latter refers only to women, as the title of *Mr.* is used for both single and married men. Consider the following rules:

- (a) It is an unwarranted, if innocuous, form of deception to allow a woman employee to sign only the initials of her given names.

Wrong:        H. I. Williams

Right:        Hazel I. Williams

(With Miss    Hazel Williams

or Mrs.)      Hazel Imogene Williams

- (b) If the signer is single, the word *Miss* in parentheses starts the typed copy of the name. However, *Miss* should not appear in the pen-written signature.

Right:    Cordially yours,

*Hazel Williams*

(Miss) Hazel Williams

- (c) A married lady preferably uses her given name in the pen-written signature, but the typed name is that of her husband preceded by *Mrs.*

Right:    Very truly yours,

*Mary Jane Beach*

Mary Jane Beach

(Mrs. Carl W. Beach)

- (d) A widow may sign her name as she did before the death of her husband, or she may just use her given name, or names. In either case, she still uses the word *Mrs.*

Right:    Yours very truly,

*Blanche B. Browne*

Blanche B. Browne

(Mrs. James D. Browne)

Right:    Yours very truly,

*Blanche B. Browne*

(Mrs.) Blanche B. Browne



- (e) A divorcee, unless she has legally resumed the title of *Miss*, should continue to use *Mrs.* in the typed signature. She may either use her own surname, or that of her husband, depending on the form chosen after the divorce, but she may not use her husband's given name or initials.

Right: Yours very truly,

*Katherine Coe*

(Mrs.) Katherine Coe

Right: Yours very truly,

*Katherine Coe Smith*

(Mrs.) Katherine Smith

Wrong: Yours very truly,

*Katherine Smith*

(Mrs.) John E. Smith

7. *Other suggestions.* Although the above covers the major points with regard to the signature in the business letter, there are other important facts that should be respected. Here they are.

(a) If it helps to harmonize with the general appearance of the letter, there is no objection to a color other than black for the pen-written name. For example, if a brown ribbon is used to type the letter, the pen-written name in the same shade may be effective.

(b) In earlier days, the use of a rubber stamp to affix the individual's name was quite common. This practice is no longer considered good form, and it also weakens the message of the letter by making it seem too casual.

(c) Another old custom, probably a carry-over from legal documents, was the typing of the word, *Signed*, at the start of the line where the pen-written name is to appear. This is a bit of formality which does no good, and it should be avoided.

(d) Similarly, the prefixing of *per* or *by* on the name line is an unnecessary formality.

(e) Titles should never appear on the same line with the pen-written signature, either before or after the individual's name. They are bad form if typed this way, but especially uncouth if written in ink along with the name.

(f) The person signing a letter should remember the appearance value of his signature. He should not write over the other lines, or at an angle. He should also stay within the limits of the space provided, and not allow the name to stick out beyond the right-hand margin.



A very bad habit, but one often followed in business letters, is the attempt to avoid responsibility for what has been said in the body of the letter (or for the errors that a reading might detect) by the addition of a qualifying statement such as, "Dictated but not read," or "Signed but not corrected." The reader has the right to resent such a sloppy and careless device, and his opinion of both writer and letter may justifiably be negative. When it is impossible to check or sign a dictated letter, the initials of the pinch-hitter should appear below the pen-written name, and in some cases a postscript by the secretary or typist may explain why the situation required special handling.

*With initials of the pinch-hitter*

Very truly yours,

*John B. Whittier*  
*B.E.F.*

John B. Whittier  
Advertising Manager

*With postscript signed by the  
secretary*

Very truly yours,

*Harry S. Wheatley*

Harry S. Wheatley

P.S. Mr. Wheatley left for Toronto before this letter could be typed. To avoid any inconvenience to you, he asked me to sign and mail it for him.

*Julia Groves*

Secretary to Mr. Wheatley

*Identification devices.* Below the signature lines, aligned with the left-hand margin, it is a business custom to place certain coded information which in some cases serves a useful purpose but in others might just as well be omitted. This statement clashes with some of the authorities who insist that these identification marks are always necessary. There are others who believe to the contrary, however. The author of this Handbook, cannot recall one single instance in his twenty-five years of business experience when he made any practical use of the identification symbols, although during that stretch of time he has handled many thousands of letters. Yet it is desirable that we keep our minds open toward any practice pertaining to business correspondence. When there is a sound *reason* for an identification line, as there may well be for certain companies, then there can be no objection to it. When the reason does not exist, as frequently it doesn't, then it becomes only another



thing to clutter the page, serving no good purpose for the company which mails the letter, and certainly none for the person who receives it.

What *are* these identification symbols, and why do they rate such a controversial paragraph? Usually they consist of the initials of the person who dictated the letter, of the person who typed it, and sometimes, also of a third person for whom the letter was dictated, and who usurps the privilege of signing it. You know, initials like these: LEF/CM    FHR:36    GHH-WII-fj.

Deciphered, they mean that a man named Luther Elijah Flesch dictated the letter, and a girl named Crystal Mooch typed it. That's the first set decoded. Jumping over to the third one, the meaning is that Walter Hoop signed a letter which George Henry Hapwood dictated and Freda Jacombs typed. Freda, of course is only small fry in the company, and so her initials are not capitalized. But that is more recognition than the typist got in the second example, for she is only number 36.

All right! You know that symbols like those just cited are generally encountered in the lower left-hand corner of business letters. But why? What's the *reason* for putting them there? "The identification line," says one of the nation's best letter-men, "provides an easy, accurate, and inconspicuous means of recording the identity of the dictator and transcriber. Its use enables a business organization to ascertain the identity of either individual by merely consulting the correspondence file."

With half of that definition at least, there must be complete agreement. Probably the typist or transcriber could not in many cases be identified any other way. Her initials, coming last of course, are a sort of trade-mark, and perhaps she takes pride in seeing them on the letters that she types. Also, because of those initials, she can be quickly brought on the carpet if she has made an error in typing embarrassing to the company.

Okay, so far, so good! But what about the initials of the dictator? If under his pen-written signature, his name is typed, then what purpose is gained by repeating his initials in the identification line? Our good authority says, they enable his identity to be known by merely consulting the correspondence file. In other words, a glance at the initials on the carbon copy quickly puts a finger on the writer. Yes, that is true. But why isn't it just as easy to look at the name typed under the pen-written signature?

Of course, if the name of the writer is *not* typed under the space left for his penned signature, then we have a very *good* reason for identifying him in some other way. In this contingency, however,



a rather recent development seems to have much in its favor. This is the typing of the *whole* name in the identification line, instead of just the initials. It may or may not be punctuated, according to the wish of the dictator or of his company correspondence supervisor.

Abner L. Rich: AC

A. L. Rich/AC

ALRich-AC

ALRich  
AC

Any of the above forms are acceptable—the best would be the one least conspicuous. A great advantage of the idea is that it takes one of the lines away from the signature which, as we have seen, is too cumbersome in many of its forms.

Sticking to our premise of accepting the initials or name of the dictator in the identification line when there is a good *reason* for it, we must admit the necessity when a third party enters the picture, as the one who signs the letter even though he did not write it. For example, in some companies the lamentable practice still prevails of having all letters dictated within a department signed by the highest in authority. Thus, all collection letters are signed by the Credit Manager, all sales letters by the Sales Manager, and similarly throughout all the company units. This means that if the company is large, a number of subordinates may dictate the letters signed by one man. The idea is to give each letter greater importance in the mind of the reader, since it apparently comes from the “head man;” but except for this questionable advantage which in the strict sense may not be ethical the practice has nothing to recommend it. It must be demoralizing for a person to dictate letters all day long, and to receive no visible credit for his work. Under such a condition, there is less incentive for superior dictation, and the company surely loses more than it gains.

From what has been said about the identification line, the following policy is presented, as being in our opinion the most consistent and logical.

1. Let the initials of the typist always be displayed—for reference purposes, and for whatever beneficial effect it may have on her morale.

2. If the same person dictates and signs the letter, use only one identification form—either his name typed under the place where



he is to sign, or his name in full typed in the line with the transcriber's initials. But don't do both.

3. If the dictator does not sign the letter, then let his initials or name appear in the identification line. (Better still, abolish the procedure with which one man takes credit for another man's labor.)

Although some authorities may not agree with this policy, which is surely their privilege, we believe it will hold water with the majority of individuals who have had considerable business experience.

*Other notations.* It is sometimes considered desirable, outside of the body of the letter, to call the reader's attention to some special feature of the mailing such as the presence of an enclosure, the sending of an extra copy to some other individual, or some particular form of handling. These notations are customarily placed in line with the left-hand margin and below the identification marks; the number of spaces depends on the length of the letter and the judgment of the typist or dictator.

It is not always necessary to refer in this special way to an enclosure, but usually the plan has merit. For example, in a large company where all letters are folded and prepared for mailing in a centralized department, the word *Enclosure* tells the clerk that something besides the letter-page is intended to go into the envelope. Thus, the simple device helps to reduce the possibility of error.

Another benefit is to the recipient of the letter. The word calls his attention to the fact that something extra accompanies the letter. You probably have had the experience of removing a letter from the envelope and overlooking an enclosure. If it was a check, you no doubt were put to considerable inconvenience in getting a duplicate. Had the word *Enclosure* been plainly typed on the page, or better still, the words, *Check Enclosed*, the catastrophe would have been prevented.

The preferred position of an enclosure notation is immediately below the identification line. It may be abbreviated, but commands more attention if spelled out. If there are two or more enclosures, that fact is also indicated either by word or numeral. Here are some of the forms commonly used.

RCHunter:WV  
Enclosure

WH:ACE:MJ  
Enclosures 2

GAF/fc  
2 Encls.

Carl F. Lunt:ad  
Check Enclosed

J.J.Cartwell:6  
Enclosure:  
Mortgage



In the same manner, the notation may call attention to a special form of mailing.

MLFahnestock: lef  
Registered mail

JSC/GRT  
AIR MAIL

KIUtterbach: OR  
Special delivery

When the writer wishes his reader to know that a copy of the letter is being mailed to another individual, a notation to that effect is placed in line with the left-hand margin. To give it special emphasis, the notation is usually the last item typed on the page, and if possible, a few spaces removed from any other items. The full name and title of the individual is typed, but the symbol C.C. (Carbon Copy) may be used if desired instead of the word, *Copy*.

Very truly yours,  
The Maxwell Company  
*J. H. Cambleton*  
Sales Manager

JHCambleton:AC  
C.C. Mr. John Doe

Cordially yours,  
*Luther G. Long*  
Luther G. Long  
Credit Manager

MLF  
Copy to Miss Alice Dill

Sincerely,  
*R. C. Bellwether*  
Advertising Director

RCBellwether:MLK  
Copies to:  
Mr. James Duncan  
Dr. R. L. Defoe



Sometimes, for good reason, the writer of the letter does not wish the recipient to know that other individuals are getting copies. Then the notation is placed only on the carbon copy. To make it more conspicuous, the position generally preferred is at the top of the page several spaces above the inside address.

*The postscript.* Opinion as to the value of the postscript in the business letter is divided—some think it serves a useful purpose, and others believe it should never be used. The latter hold that anything that needs mention can be adequately covered in the body of the letter, and that the postscript is merely an evidence of careless preparation and thinking. We believe this is true in the great majority of cases, as it is very easy to overlook a point until the main part of the letter has been dictated, and then say, "Oh, yes, put this in a postscript." This, of course, is inexcusable. Possibly if all postscripts were outlawed, better letters would be the result.

When *purposely* used, the postscript gets a spotlight position which gives an emphasis to its content that might otherwise be rather difficult to attain. It is a device often used with powerful effect in the sales letter, and we hardly think it should be ruled out completely. It does not particularly injure the appearance of a letter, certainly to no greater degree than some of the other notations we have been surveying. However, postscripts should never be longer than a few words, or the one argument of gaining special attention is eliminated.

When a postscript is used, the common practice is to place the initials, P. S., in line with the left-hand margin, and two or more spaces below the last line of the signature. This puts it ahead of the identification initials, but occasionally you see the positions reversed. The message of the postscript should follow on the same line as the P. S., and should be punctuated like any sentence. As justified by those who cling to it, the postscript highlights some special fact. It may be a repetition of something told in the body of the letter, or something in the nature of a digression from the general message.

- P. S. Remember—June 2—don't fail us.
- P. S. Confidentially, you will save money by ordering before August 1. You can guess the reason.
- P. S. I saw Joe Warner yesterday. He spoke highly of your hospitality.
- P. S. It hurt me to have to write this letter, Jim. Please try to understand my position.



We see no harm in postscripts of the above variety, but you may decide for yourself whether or not to use them. Be sure you do it *purposely*, and not as an afterthought.

*Devices to gain emphasis.* To capture special attention for a word or phrase, several devices are commonly used. One is to underscore, another to use all capitals, and a third is to type the word or phrase in a different color of ink. The latter, of course, necessitates a two-color ribbon, and adds somewhat to the expense. There are other methods, such as circling the desired part of the letter, drawing a hand or arrow that points to it, or placing a cross in the margin with a red pencil, but in general these are messy in appearance and cannot be recommended. Your opinion, however, of any of these devices must be tempered by the results which they attain. An example is the letter reproduced on page 357. Despite the unsightly effect created by the hand and the two encirclements, this letter produced a fifty per cent higher pull of orders than any other mailing by the same Circulation Manager to the same list. This serves once more to remind us that theory is fine but practice is wonderful.

The two devices used the most, and sometimes in combination, are underscoring and capitalization. Consider the following examples.

*Underscored:* This is the first time we have made such a liberal offer, and we do not expect ever to repeat it. You actually save two dollars, and you cannot afford to delay, as only the first thousand who reply will be accepted.

*With Capitals:* This is the first time we have made such a liberal offer, and we do not expect ever to repeat it. You actually **SAVE TWO DOLLARS**, and you cannot afford to delay, as only the **FIRST THOUSAND** who reply will be accepted.

*Combination:* This is the first time we have made such a liberal offer, and we do not expect ever to repeat it. You actually **SAVE TWO DOLLARS**, and you cannot afford to delay, as only the **FIRST THOUSAND** who reply will be accepted.

A comparison of the above three paragraphs will prove that the underscored words stand out more boldly than do those capitalized. In the same way, the combination of both gains still greater force as an eye-catcher. A further step would be typing the words in red



ink. However, there is one caution to be remembered about the use of these devices. When you *overdo* them, they tend to irritate more than please. Furthermore, if too many words and phrases are underscored or capitalized, the purpose of the device is defeated, since all of the parts emphasized compete for attention against each

MEMBER ADVERTISING  
OFFICE OF CIRCULATIONMEMBER ASSOCIATED  
FURNISHING PAPERS**HOUSE FURNISHING REVIEW**THE LEADING CLASS MAGAZINE COVERING HOUSEWARES,  
ELECTRICAL HOUSE FURNISHINGS, AND  
BATHROOM FURNISHINGS1178 BROADWAY  
NEW YORK

Dear Sir:

The enclosed card entitles you to the next **TWELVE ISSUES** of **HOUSE FURNISHING REVIEW** at \$1.00 PLUS a free copy of the Annual Directory Number.

The Directory Number - 238 Pages of Valuable Information - containing (1) Names of manufacturers of housewares, electrical house furnishings, and bathroom furnishings - all classified according to the products they make, and (2) More than 6,500 brand names together with the names of the manufacturers, is the most complete edition of its kind ever published.

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150 feature merchandising stories on how to increase profits;  
200 columns of terse news of the entire trade;  
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On your desk the enclosed card is valueless! Mail it today! It will bring a magazine and also a directory full of just the news and information you need.

TWELVE BIG ISSUES for \$1.00! And a complete Directory of the trade **FREE!** Do not send any money now. We will send you a bill later. Simply fill in the address at which you wish to receive **HOUSE FURNISHING REVIEW** and mail the card today.

Cordially yours,

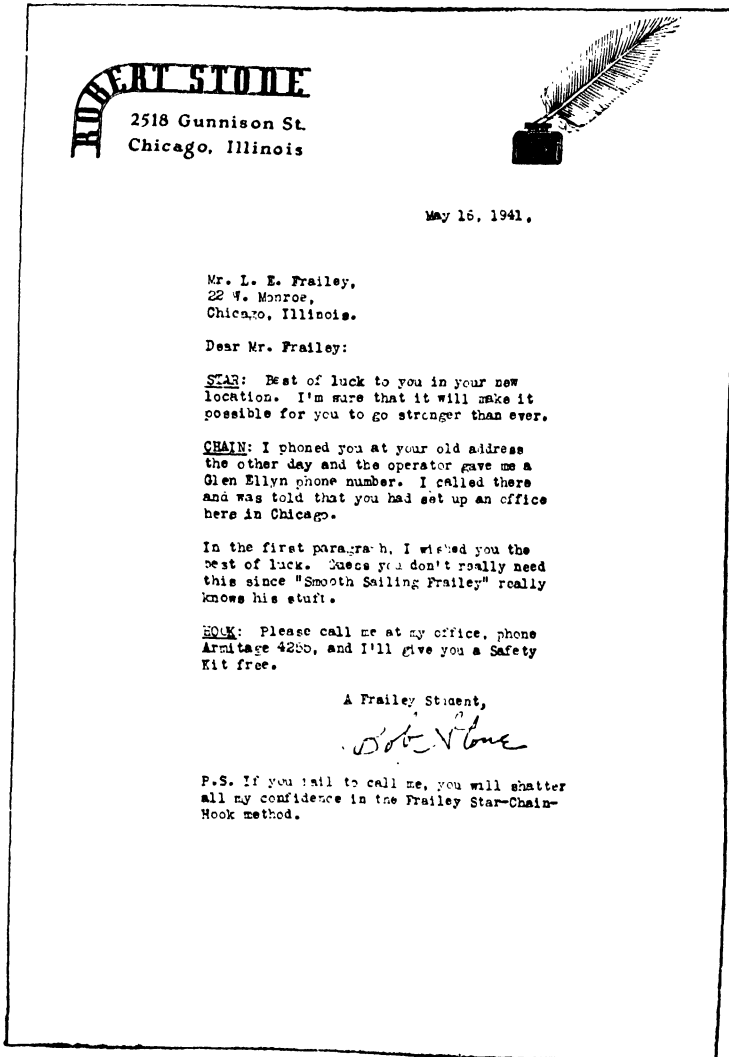
Circulation Manager

A.J. Cavanagh:S  
Enc.**HOUSE FURNISHING REVIEW**Cabinets  
Exhaustors  
Both Sinks  
Stoves  
Kitchenware  
Gas RangesWoodware  
Electric Fans  
Plastic Goods  
Folddes  
Both Stools  
Oil RangesVentiles  
Electric Mixers  
Refrigerators  
Cupped Freezers  
Electric Ranges  
Fire Place EquipmentGarden Supply  
Window Shades  
Electric Heaters  
Washing Machines  
Aluminumware  
Moist PreservativesTable Appliances  
Shower Curtains  
Vacuum Cleaners  
Coffee Makers  
Ironware  
Both Sprays



other. This is illustrated when we increase the underscoring and capitalization in the third of the above examples.

*Overdone:* This is THE FIRST TIME we have made such a LIBERAL OFFER, and we do not expect ever to repeat it. You actually SAVE TWO DOLLARS, and you CANNOT AFFORD TO DELAY, as only the FIRST THOUSAND who reply will be ACCEPTED.



ORIGINAL LETTERHEAD HAS A RED FEATHER ATTACHED



Only confusion is created with so many words emphasized. In fact, it is questionable which parts stand out the most—those highlighted, or those left untouched. The letter reproduced on page 358 is an example of emphasis sought with considerable restraint. Only three words are capitalized, but as paragraph starters they hold special prominence. Incidentally, the writer, Mr. Robert Stone, is a highly successful sales-letter writer, and you will notice that he uses a postscript for a thought connected with the body of his message but somewhat remote from it.

*Second sheets.* When two or more pages are necessary for a business letter the second page should be typed on exactly the same paper as that used in the official company stationery. It is a poor form of economy to have a special paper of inferior quality and weight for the extra pages, even though the practice is not uncommon. The saving is inconsequential, and certainly the effect on the average reader is negative.

Custom varies as to what the notation on the second sheet shall be. Usually it consists simply of the numeral 2, in parentheses, typed about four spaces below the top of the page. If on the left side of the page, the designation also sets the margin line, which should be of the same width as on the first page.

There are those who like dashes with the number, and we won't split hairs about that. If -2- looks better to them than (2), or if they prefer *Page Two* to the numeral, that's okay, too. There does seem to be good reason for adding two other items—the name of the recipient, and the date. In the event the second sheet was detached from the first (perhaps in the mailing department where incoming letters are received) this additional information becomes valuable. Just how the three items are to be placed on the page is a matter of personal preference, but the following form is both attractive and consistent with the position of the name and date on the first page.

(2)

Mr. James A. Cook

November 1, 1947

In transcribing a letter the typist sometimes finds that the body has taken all of the first page and only complimentary close and signature remain. This results in an odd-looking second page; even if the letter has to be done over, it should in every case be avoided. After making a few of these major corrections, the typist soon learns to plan her margins so that at least two lines of the body will be carried over, and to understand that nothing less will be accepted.



The typist, of course, is an important member of the team which gets out the daily run of business letters. She may travel with the imposing title of *Secretary*, or she may be just one of the girls in the *Transcription Department*, but in either case she is the one who actually puts the letter on the page. How she functions and the obligations she must meet will be investigated in the following Section—*Secretarial Co-operation*.



## SECTION

## 5

# SECRETARIAL CO-OPERATION

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## SECTION

# 5

## SECRETARIAL CO-OPERATION

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### 1. *The Secretary's Share*

*Something more than a robot.* Certain skills and services are taken for granted in secretarial performance. Any secretary is expected to take dictation accurately, to type at a fair speed, to spell and punctuate properly, and to do the other more or less mechanical things which are necessary. Some secretaries who hardly deserve the title stop at this point, either from lack of initiative and intelligence, or because they are not given enough rope by their superiors. Some business men are so *detail minded* they find it difficult to delegate responsibility, not realizing that if others were allowed to share the load, they would have more time for creative thinking, and thus enhance their own value to the company. Then, too, there still persists the notion that women are inferior to men in business, and that they cannot be trusted with important responsibilities—a notion which in many actual cases has been proved both false and absurd. An adequately trained and properly motivated secretary can be considerably more than a robot—if given the opportunity.

Especially is this true with respect to business correspondence. In the ideal sense, the secretary should understand the principles of letter-writing as well as does her superior. She should be able to go through the day's incoming mail and set aside the portion she can answer, without bothering the man for whom she works until the replies are placed on his desk for him to read and sign. Just how far she can be permitted to go depends on a number of variable factors—her length of experience on the particular job, her grasp of the problems covered in the letters, her native intelligence, and the willingness of her superior to let her share the load.

*A matter of teamwork.* Obviously, the best results are attained when dictator and secretary work together as a team, the responsibilities of each mutually understood, and the whole co-ordinated on a basis of respect and fair treatment. The fact that the dictator happens to be the "boss" should in no way disturb this relationship, and each party has the right to expect certain contributions from



the other. In either case, the number of these obligations is numerous but here are some of the more important. The individual for whom the secretary works has the right to expect:

1. That the secretary maintain a high standard of mechanical efficiency—in taking dictation, in typing, in spelling and punctuation, and in all the other phases of her work which will be surveyed in this section.

2. That the secretary possess sufficient initiative and intelligence to handle routine correspondence herself without asking needless questions.

3. That the secretary be absolutely trustworthy with respect to confidential matters which come under her observation, so that none of them are ever discussed with any other individual.

4. That the secretary work diligently during the hours for which she is paid, and that she be willing to stay beyond those hours when an emergency develops that could not be anticipated or prevented.

5. That the secretary be pleasant and eager to co-operate in contacts with others in the company.

6. That the secretary approach her work, day in and day out, with genuine enthusiasm, a spirit of loyalty, and that poise which leaves her undisturbed under high pressure.

In return, the secretary has the right to expect:

1. That the dictator schedule his time to co-ordinate with hers, so that she is not left idle during certain periods of the day and then asked to work overtime.

2. That the dictator speak clearly, spell out proper names, and preferably not blow smoke in her face during this business procedure.

3. That the dictator, or his superiors, provide favorable working conditions such as plenty of light, fresh air, and equipment with which quality performance can be maintained.

4. That the dictator give her as much responsibility as she is able to assume with satisfaction to the company and credit to herself.

5. That the dictator treat her with courtesy and respect, without condescension—keeping the relationship on a friendly but impersonal basis.

6. That the dictator make every effort to keep her salary on a level commensurate with the value of her services and in line with that paid in other good companies.

Although you may think of other points for either or both of the above lists, we think they are the essentials to proper co-ordination between two individuals who labor together to produce effective business letters. Each of the two has a job to do, but neither can work with highest efficiency without the co-operation of the other.



*Ten Commandments on Dictation.* The forming of good dictation habits is a worthy goal for any person who aspires to success as a business correspondent. Many typists and secretaries are needlessly handicapped by the thoughtless inconsideration of dictators, and the result is a net loss to their companies. The following "Ten Commandments on Dictation," have considerable truth in them although written in satirical style. The author is unknown, but they appeared some time ago in the *Panthergram*, a company magazine issued by the Panther Oil & Grease Manufacturing Co., of Fort Worth, Texas.

*Ten Commandments on Dictation*

1. Always clear your throat with a loud, guttural, "Ah" or "Oh." Stenographers like that. It makes them jittery.
2. Always dictate with gum in your mouth. Stenographers hear so much better the things you say.
3. Always mumble every other word. That'll keep them guessing.
4. Always dictate without making previous notes on points you wish to bring out. The stenographer enjoys the time she sits and dawdles while you hem and haw for ways to express important issues.
5. Always be sure to change your letter at least four times while dictating. You can always tell the stenographer later, "Why I never said that, Miss Brown."
6. Always use a string of words when a short phrase is more concise. You can't imagine how business men enjoy reading long drawn-out, meaningless letters.
7. Always talk a long time over the phone while the girl is waiting for your dictation. That will make her see red, especially when you expect her to do the work of two persons. Besides, what can she say? You're the boss, so you think. Her private opinion would startle you.
8. Always dictate letters tracing for replies. Your stenographer hasn't the intelligence to write a simple "please reply" letter. If she handled it herself, that would save time. But it's silly to consider time in your business.
9. Always ask the stenographer for files several times during the dictating period. It's great fun to see her bobbing up to get the files. Yes, try it yourself sometime.
10. Above all, always give the stenographer single notes at five or eight minute intervals when she returns to her desk with loads of dictation to transcribe. That will make her work run smoothly, and will also make her family bless you when she gets home nervous and jittery.



*Final responsibility the dictator's.* In a consideration of the mutual obligations of the dictator and secretary or typist, one fact needs emphasis. The captain of this little team is the man who dictates the letter. He must assume the final responsibility for its content and appearance. If an error has been made in the typing, if the general appearance is sloppy, if any other thing about the letter is wrong, the fault in one sense is the stenographer's, but the man who signs the letter must "take the rap" for it. His signature means that he has read and approved what the letter says. Thus, in the larger sense, he is the one finally responsible. It is *his* letter. He allows it to be mailed. He is more at fault than anyone else for the errors.

If the above is true, and nobody can dispute it, what does it mean to the letter-writer? Simply this! Every letter should be *read* carefully before it is signed. Every letter should be examined critically, keeping in mind the possible effect of its appearance on the reader. The dictator must *cancel* his own letters. His duty is to detect anything wrong in or about them. No matter how much confidence he may have in his secretary, nor how fully it may be deserved, the possibility of error is ever present. In fairness to the company as well as to himself, no man can afford to sign a letter without reading it.

Perhaps we seem to be placing much stress on a rather simple routine in letter-writing. But it must be so. Thousands of business communications are mailed without this final check on their accuracy and appearance and much grief is caused by this inexcusable negligence. *Read before you sign - always.* Like Andrew H. Brown, "check and double-check." Be sure the letter says exactly what you think it does, in the way that you intended.

With just as much force, and perhaps more, this rule applies to the letters written *for* you and placed on your desk to be signed. Even though not likely to be as important in content, they still demand a thorough reading. How else can you be sure that you approve what has been said? The pinch-hitter passes out of the picture as soon as your signature is placed on the page. It then becomes *your* letter.

*What letters can a secretary write?* The types of business letters that an intelligent secretary can write for her superior's signature are numerous, but those that she is *allowed* to write depend on the inclination of the individual who makes the decision. Some executives have secretaries, often men, who handle practically all of their mail. Others draw the line between routine letters and those where policies are involved. After experience on the job, a com-



petent secretary is soon able to draw her own line—passing to her executive those which she does not feel qualified to handle. Her best guide, of course, is “When in doubt, *lon’t*.”

To describe all of the letter-situations that a secretary might logically be allowed to handle would be an endless job. It would also be influenced by the nature of the business and the department with which the executive was connected. Thus, the Advertising Manager’s secretary would be able to write more letters than the secretary of the Head of the Research Department, since the latter’s correspondence might be more confidential and technical. To steer our thinking in the right direction, here is the hypothetical way that Sally Jones, secretary to Personnel Director John Bates, might divide one batch of incoming mail.

The secretary of the local Y.M.C.A. wants to know if Bates will preside at a sports banquet on May 28. (Sally’s letter to answer after Bates says “yes” or “no.” She knows Bates will be in New York that date.)

John Gleason, age 16, with two years of high school, wants a job in the office. (The company hires only boys who have graduated from high school. Another one for Sally.)

An official of the National Association of Credit Unions wants to know if Bates is ready to sponsor a company credit union. (Bates has never dictated or talked to Sally about credit unions. He will have to answer.)

The mother of a dismissed employee writes a bitter tirade and wants to know why her daughter was so badly treated. (Sally knows the girl was caught stealing, but she feels the situation should be handled by Bates. She is right.)

Mr. Johnson wants a case of the company’s breakfast food for a bazaar—gratis. (This is a repetitive situation that happens several times a year. The answer is “no” and Sally knows how to give it. Her letter.)

Another company wants information about a former employee. (Sally consults the file. No complications! She can write the reply.)

The manager of a bowling team wants the company to sponsor their entry in the All Star League, as an advertising project. (Easy for Sally! She can write that the question is being referred to the Advertising Manager.)

The president of an eastern firm wants to know the experience of Sally’s company with annual compulsory health examinations. (Sally knows the answer, but isn’t sure how much of it should be told. “When in doubt, don’t.” The letter goes to Bates.)



The head of a radio chain wants to know if a questionnaire about programs can be distributed to the employees. (For Bates. Again, Sally isn't sure.)

A former worker threatens to sue the company for an alleged injury. (Sally attaches a memo to this letter . . . "Mr. Bates: Shall I pass this to legal department?"

We could continue to look over Sally's shoulder as she examines the incoming mail of Mr. Bates, but ten of the letters are sufficient to illustrate our point. If Mr. Bates had been the type of executive (?) who must have his fingers in every detail, Sally would merely have opened the letters and placed them all on his desk. Valuable time would have been lost because any intelligent girl could answer some of those letters. It also would have meant making a robot out of Sally.

Instead, what actually happens in this hypothetical example? Well, Sally puts only five of the letters on Mr. Bates' desk, and one of them may be forwarded to the legal department. The other five will get to Mr. Bates later, but attached to each will be a letter all composed, typed, and ready for signature.

Frequently the question arises as to what letters, among those the secretary actually writes, she should be permitted to sign. The answer demands consideration for the reader more than anything else. If the reader, in the judgment of the dictator or secretary, would *expect* his letter to be handled by the executive, and might be offended if it were passed down to a subordinate, then obviously it would be poor business procedure to disregard his feelings. On the other hand, there are numerous situations where the fellow getting the reply cares only for the information he is after. In such cases, the secretary may be allowed to sign her own letters, and the privilege is a morale-building factor which carries over to the rest of her work.

The most common instance is, of course, when the executive is out of town. The secretary, in explaining the delay, is performing a service that the reader appreciates and he could not possibly be offended in seeing the signature (*Miss*) *Genera Case, Secretary to Mr. John Doe*. Often, the letter consists of the simple information that the executive is out of town, and the matter will be called to his attention as soon as he gets back. Other times, the secretary may go so far as to give the information wanted. Infrequently, she may even launch out on a sales presentation. The two letters which follow are examples of the secretary pinch-hitting for the "boss."

From R. T. Hill, Vice-President of Carleton D. Beh Co., Des Moines, Iowa, came the letter below, addressed to Mr. A. R. MacFarland, of the United Autographic Register Co., Chicago.



Dear Mr. MacFarland:

We hope you take great pride in the award of a Gold Medal by the Dartnell Corporation for your outstanding letter.

There may not be anything develop from this request (the usual cautious approach anticipating high-pressure selling) but if you will have your nimble-fingered, sharp-eyed girls pick out the forms applicable to the *Municipal Bond Business* and send them along, we would like to take a good square look.

You needn't mind passing this along to your Des Moines office, because we have just talked to Mr. Denby and he is coming to see us early next week.

(No complimentary close)

Now the reply. The pinch-hitter was Mr. MacFarland's secretary, Edith P. Hoffman, and here is how she hit the ball.

Dear Mr. Hill:

Thank you for your letter of January 3 to my boss, Mr. A. R. MacFarland. Since he is out of town, I know he would want me to acknowledge this very interesting letter.

Being human, we naturally take great pride in the award made by Frailey. No doubt you're familiar with his book "Smooth Sailing Letters"—it's worthwhile.

Incidentally, before we get down to high-pressuring you, your own letter constitutes a good letter according to this month's *READER'S DIGEST*. In this issue, I found: "The test of a good letter is a very simple one. If one seems to hear the person talking as one reads, it is a good letter." And I can hear you talking in your letter.

The nimble-fingered, sharp-eyed girls picked out a batch of forms for you that we thought were applicable. You may be sure that when you challenged us (by those adjectives) we did our very best. However, as Mr. Denby has probably told you—each installation or system is made to fit the needs and problems of the user. He will be glad to work with you in devising the best system for you.

You don't mind if I send a carbon of this letter to Denby, do you? I hope you decide to Uarcoize. If we can serve you further, just say the word.

Sincerely yours,

Orchids to this secretary! She saw her chance to get a business deal started and she didn't muff it. That the recipient of her letter was pleasantly impressed is proved by his comment. Says Vice-President Hill, "Edith Hoffman's letter appeals to me . . .



I think it's a honey." And that's the final test of any letter—the reader's reaction to it.

A somewhat different sales effort is that made for a company in Tampa, Thompson & Company Incorporated, by the secretary of the Sales Manager. We assume he knew about the letter, and approved the style as appropriate for buyers of cigars by mail.

Dear Mr. Doe:

I'm all alone again!

Every year about this time, my boss, Thomas Leroy Timmins, Esq., takes unto himself a little tarpon fishing. Just as soon as the Gulf News announces the Silver Kings are running, he starts to get fidgety.

So for the next two weeks while TL is living the life of Reilly aboard the Queenie May, I'll be in the driver's seat, playing a lunch. And here it is!

I figure that you, too, might be planning a trip somewhere—the beginning of summer brings out the Gypsy in everybody. If I am right, then you'll want some good cigars to take along. While the great Timmins is piscatorially inclined, here's my best bet: a box of 50 Long Filler (4 $\frac{3}{4}$ " ) Perfectos (Windsors 10¢ size) and a special going away box of 25 Hand Made (5" ) Queens (2/25¢ value). Both are extra light, mild cigars for warm weather smoking, which means—added pleasure for you.

Special price during the next two weeks, \$6.60 delivered!

In case you think a woman doesn't know cigar values, give me a chance, will you? Then, if you don't agree with me, send 'em back. You can't lose because I'll O. K. the postage both ways.

Please?

As ever,

Sign and return promptly.

O. K. Send me prepaid, 50 Windsors and 25 Queens on trial. I'll remit or return them promptly.

(Personal Signature)

You know, of course, the less pretentious letter-attempts in which the secretary merely tells the reader that her executive is out of town, but even they can contain a sales touch, as did the one re-



printed on page 11, Section 1. Sometimes even one word will do this extra job.

Dear Mr. Barton:

It will be about ten days before you get the information about our *outstanding* porch paints, as Mr. James is out of town. But I will personally see that he writes to you the first day he is back in his office. You can be sure he will appreciate your interest.

Very truly yours,

*The more mechanical essentials.* Turning from the plus services that a secretary may be qualified to render, we confront a wide range of specialized knowledge which is essential if good letters are to be produced. It includes knowing how to spell, to punctuate, and all the other mechanics, as well as a thorough acquaintance with the matters discussed in Section 4. For example, many a successful letter writer confesses unsureness in spelling, and leans heavily on his secretary to offset that weakness. Thus, the skills we are about to inspect are particularly the responsibility of the secretary, although better results are probable when the dictator is competent with respect to them. No girl, however, could long hold a secretarial position without the knowledge of rules and customs that govern any of the following aspects of letter-writing.

Spelling  
Punctuation  
Word Usage  
Abbreviation  
Capitalization  
Word division  
Verb forms  
Paragraphing  
Tabulations  
Spacing  
Fill-ins on form letters

Correctness in all of the above is an absolute necessity, since any lack is an indication to the reader of carelessness, ignorance, or indifference. Especially is this true when the letter goes to an individual who himself is well informed and able to spot quickly any evidence of slovenly work or of an ignoramus. Errors of this kind are inexcusable and may destroy the effectiveness of the business letter in which they are permitted to remain.



A good example of how mechanical errors may strike the reader is furnished by the following letter of protest from a prominent business executive—somewhat abridged to conceal the identity of writer and recipient.

Dear Mr. Doe:

I am enclosing four letters received from you recently. They show one of the reasons why so many letters go into the little round file, usually kept on the floor in the corner.

These four letters have each been dictated to a different girl, according to the initials. Each one has a different spelling of our company name, ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous.

One of these letters is really remarkable. My name is spelled in two ways just three lines apart. There are six misspelled words.

We have respected your opinions for years. Maybe you had better take a look at some of your own suggestions.

Yours very truly,

Your commentator hastens to assure you that he did not himself receive the above letter. But it does illustrate a true incident, as does a sentence taken from a letter to the Governor of one of our states. This sentence had been dictated to compliment the statesman on one of his radio speeches. But an error in typing one word rather lessened the commendation.

Dictated: "Your speech last night was one of the most honorable discussions of the subject I ever have heard."

Typed: "Your speech last night was one of the most horrible discussions of the subject I ever have heard."

Probably you are able without any direction to find the one word which did the damage. We doubt if the Governor was pleased.

*Other inexcusable errors.* If you have been at all disturbed to find what a mistake in typing one word could do to a business letter, what will you think of the *a* that slipped in where an *e* belonged? Later, the typist admitted that she had paused to consider the spelling of the word, but she hadn't thought it mattered enough to warrant a peek in the dictionary.

The circumstances are interesting. An insurance company had unwisely notified agents of a change in policy, but better judgment resulted in the decision not to change it. Hence, a notice was dictated to the agents that the change of policy would not be



effected. Had the letter gone out that way, it would have been understood that the change was cancelled. But, no. Instead, the typist wrote, "The change in policy will not be affected." In other words, the change was to stand approved, and the agents acted accordingly. Weeks later, executives of the company were astounded to discover that all over the country the change was being carried out. As quickly as possible, things were set right, but during the period of the error's enforcement the actual loss to the company totaled more than ten thousand dollars. You might guess that the typist lost her job, but the executives ruled that such an important letter should have been more carefully checked by the dictator. The mistake was charged to experience, and you can wager no more letters leave the desk of that dictator without a thorough reading.

Errors in titles and the spelling of names are particularly offensive. Here are three examples. They are all clipped from letters actually signed and mailed by business men. Perhaps, we can be excused for *not* calling them *executives*.

(a)

Miss Cora Grace Harwood  
Purina Mills Research Dpt,  
St, Louis, Missouri,

Dear madam:

Your card addressed to us has come to hand and will say in reply to same that . . .

The lady is addressed first as *Miss*, and later as *madam*, with *madam* not capitalized. Three commas are used for periods. In the inside address, two lines have closed punctuation, one line has open style. These lines are not aligned properly. *Dpt.* is an incorrect abbreviation. The whiskers in the first sentence were duplicated throughout the letter.

(b)

S. Fraley  
2470 Estes  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mrs. Frailey:

One of our routemen tells me that you are just moving into the neighborhood which he is serving, and . . .

*S. Fraley* later becomes *Mrs. Frailey* without a given name or initials. *2470 Estes* is not qualified as a street, avenue, or in any



other form. Curiously enough, the body of the letter is **natural**, bright, and interesting.

(c)

Mr. W. E. Cornelius,  
West Sales Manager,  
Chicago Shaft Co.,  
4555 Wabash Avenue,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Mr. Cressman: --

It is not too early to think about Christmas presents to your customers and friends. . . .

An unpardonable error appears in the confusion of names—first, *Cornelius*, and then, *Cressman*. A minor error is the dash after the colon, following salutation.

A tragic fact about two of the above three letters is that in *content* they were quite acceptable. Thus, we have evidence of divided responsibility and the total lack of final inspection before they were signed and mailed. In each case, the body of the letter was dictated by an individual with more than average skill. Then the job was left to a typist for fill-in of inside address and salutation. Both letters were ruined by mechanical errors which should never have been made or allowed to go undetected.

An even worse example is the letter shown below. It was sent from the superintendent's office of one of our largest insurance companies. It was signed by the superintendent. The letterhead has been removed to prevent identification.

#### THIS LETTER NEVER HAD A CHANCE

Miss -----  
52 Slocum St.,  
Germantown, Pa.

Dear Madam:

It is a man-sized job to support a household and keep the home together.

A wife has another man-sized job looking after the family, running the house and making it in truth a home. If you should be called to leave your home for always, could your wife handle *both* jobs?

Life-insurance dollars would take the harder job off her hands. The cheery part of it is that if you are spared for happy days together, after working years end, your life-insurance dollars may serve you well in old age.



I am asking a member of our staff to show you how to combine these two features in the best way for your own particular needs. I feel sure you will be glad to look into the subject carefully when he calls.

Very truly yours,

Superintendent.

The body of the letter talks to a man, but it is addressed to a woman—first as *Miss*, then as *Madam*. The badly aligned inside address and salutation are in elite type—the body in pica. It is hard to believe that such a monstrosity could have been mailed by one of our biggest insurance companies, but it actually happened.


To the late Carl Wollner, a Texas business leader always interested in better letters, you are indebted for the **WORLD'S WORST SALES LETTER**, reproduced in part on page 376. Fictitious names and numbers have been substituted to conceal the sender's identity. It was received many years ago by a fellow executive of Mr. Wollner's in response to a request for information about a certain filing system. The typist and dictator, who signed his name as Sales Manager, co-operated to produce an unbelievably ineffective letter attempt to get business.

The content is so futile that it amounts to nothing. Instead of explaining *why* the filing system is good, this sales manager is contented to merely say it has "many extra advantages." That's all, and you will concede it misses the boat by a mile. Then the typist did her share to make the letter utterly worthless. She puts the letter so near the top of the page that it almost collides with the firm's letterhead; the date line is placed a little above the name of the city. With that bad start, she goes on to really outdo herself. None of the abbreviations are followed by periods. Someone has told her about "open" punctuation, and to her that means none at all. Although *company* and *street* are abbreviated, the name of the state is not.

Shall we blame this Texas girl for this letter? No, not too much. The dictator must have thought it looked all right or he would not have signed it, and his own sales message is certainly worse than her typing. But what a team these two workers did make! How well they did co-operate in turning out a letter to which no business executive would give a second thought!

Having seen the harm that carelessness or inaccuracy can do in a business letter, we may now proceed to a more detailed examination of the various types of knowledge and skill for which the secretary is primarily responsible. Thus, you may use the remainder of this Section as a guide when in doubt as to correctness. The rules and



<i>The Indexer Co.</i>		
NUMBERING	123 EAST NORTH ST. BOSTON	INDEXING
<div style="text-align: right; margin-bottom: 10px;">July 3, 1945</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> Wildcat Oil &amp; Tar Mfg. Co.  N. Main Street  Gum Tree, Ark. </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> Dear Mr. Smart: </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">There are many extra advantages, over and above time savings, which makes Indexer worth while.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: right; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Yours very truly,</p>  </div> <div> AL:og </div>		

### WORLD'S WORST ANSWER TO INQUIRY

the examples given are not complete, but they cover the most common difficulties and will help you in the majority of the cases when you are not sure of your ground.

## *2. Correctness in Spelling*

*Largely a problem of memory.* Because of the many exceptions to the rules, a good memory is paramount for anyone who aspires to



improve his spelling ability. The rules are helpful, but unless the exceptions are understood you can see that even the rules may lead to errors. It is unfortunate that in our early schooling most of us did not spend enough time on spelling, or get adequate instruction and drilling, for the assumption is that any individual finishing the eighth grade should be a reasonably good speller. You know that this is not true, for many of our most brilliant leaders, and even some who depend on writing for their living, are not accurate spellers. This fact increases the importance of the secretary, who must be expected to compensate for this weakness.

Improvement in spelling may be gained by anyone who will make the effort and a good dictionary will always come to the rescue. The individual who really wants to correct spelling weaknesses should concentrate in his reading on the spelling of words, especially those which are new to him, or not commonly used in his own dictation. Moreover, when he knows he has misspelled a word, or there is one which always causes him difficulty, he should take time to *master* the spelling so that it will never again be a problem. One good device is to write the word a number of times, looking hard at it with the utmost concentration. This may seem a childish pastime, but nevertheless it does get results, and sometimes we must revert to early school procedures to gain the knowledge which for one reason or other we failed to acquire. There is no sensible reason why a person should continue to misspell the same word; such a practice can only be taken as evidence of indifference, and a lack of any genuine determination to correct the weakness. True, there are some professional and business folks who seem to take pride in their inability to spell, as if it were a trait common to genius. For this point of view there is probably no cure, although it is pure nonsense.

*The most essential rules.* For complete knowledge of the rules for spelling, you should turn to a textbook on the subject. Those below, selected for your inspection, are only the ones which seem to include most of our spelling difficulties. The others we leave to your own initiative—when and if you may care to study them.

(a) *When to double final consonant.*

Here is a problem that probably comes up more often than any other in spelling. Should there be two *n*'s in adding *ing* to *plan*? Two *t*'s in adding *ed* to *profit*? Two *g*'s in adding *age* to *bag*? Well, the rule is that *four* conditions must prevail before the final consonant is doubled; and if any one of these conditions is absent, it is not doubled. Or, put it this way:

The final consonant is doubled if: (1) the word ends in a *single consonant*; (2) this single consonant is preceded by a *single vowel*;



(3) the accent falls on the *last syllable* of the word, which would include words of one syllable; and (4) the syllable to be added *begins with a vowel*.

For example, how shall we add *ing* to *begin*? Consider the four conditions. If the word meets them all, we should double the *n*. Does it? (1) *Begin* ends with the single consonant *n*. (2) This *n* is preceded by the single vowel *i*. (3) The word has two syllables, and the accent falls on the last. (4) The syllable to be added, *ing*, does begin with a vowel. Okay, we have the answer—when adding *ing* to *begin* the consonant should be doubled—*begin*, *beginning*.

Let's try it again—how shall we add *ed* to *profit*? Again, the four conditions! (1) *Profit* ends with the consonant *t*. (2) This consonant is preceded by the single vowel *i*. So far, so good. (3) The word has two syllables, but the accent is *not* on the last. Okay, we have the answer. The third condition does not exist. When adding *ed* to *profit* the consonant should *not* be doubled—*profit*, *profited*.

Fine! The rule really works, doesn't it? Once more, what shall we do in adding *er* to *brief*? What were those four conditions? (1) Does *brief* end with a single consonant? Yes, *f*. (2) Is that single consonant preceded by a *single* vowel? No, there are *two* vowels, *e* and *i*, preceding *f*. We need go no further. The final consonant is *not* doubled—*brief*, *briefer*.

(b) *When to drop the final e.*

This is another very common problem in spelling because so many words are involved. When adding *ing* to *retire* should the final *e* be dropped? What about adding *able* to *sale*—*able* to *manage*? The rule that covers most of these situations is simple enough, but there is a twist to it that you should take pains to understand. Here is how it reads:

When adding a syllable to a word ending in silent *e*, remember two conditions: (1) if the syllable added *begins with a vowel*, drop the silent *e*; (2) if the syllable added *begins with a consonant*, retain the *e*.

For example, *advertise* becomes *advertising*, dropping the *e*, because the syllable *ing* begins with a vowel. But *advertise* becomes *advertisement*, retaining the *e*, because the syllable *ment* begins with a consonant.

That's easy, but here is the "twist"—some exceptions.

(1) In adding *able* or *ous* where the final *e* is preceded by *c* or *g*, disregard the rule and keep the *e*. Thus, *manage*, a word with the final *e* preceded by *g*, becomes *manageable*. *Courage*, a word with the final *e* preceded by *g*, becomes *courageous*. In the same way, *service* becomes *serviceable*—*advantage*, *advantageous*.



(2) In adding *ment* to words ending in *dge*, disregard the rule, and drop the *e*, even though *ment* does begin with a consonant. Thus, *judge* becomes *judgment*, and *ackowledge* becomes *acknowledgment*.

(3) To gain the proper pronunciation, a few words retain the *e*, even when *ing*, beginning with a vowel, is added. They are *dye*, *toe*, *shoe*, *singe*, and *tinge*, which are correctly spelled *dyeing*, *toeing*, *shoeing*, *singeing*, and *tingeing*.

(4) When adding a syllable to a word ending with *ee*, the *e* sound not silent, both of the *e*'s are retained. Example: *guarantee*, *guaranteeing*.

(c) *Words ending in ei and ie.*

Many people find it hard to remember whether *ei* or *ie* is the proper combination for certain words. In general, the following rules will be helpful, but you will have to remember exceptions.

The *e* comes first when the combination is preceded by *s* or a soft *c*. Examples: *receive*, *seize*. Exceptions: *siege*, *financier*, *sieve*.

The *i* comes first when the combination is preceded by other letters. Examples: *believe*, *piece*, *fierce*, *niece*, *grieve*. Exceptions: *neither*, *leisure*, *forfeit*.

The *e* comes first when the combination has the sound of long *a* or long *i*. Examples: *sleigh*, *neighbor*, *weigh*, *sleight*, *skein*. No exceptions.

As guides for using these two combinations, and within their limits they are useful, some spellers remember the old jingles:

Put *i* before *e*  
Except after *c*,  
Or when sounded like *a*  
As in neighbor and weigh.

If the letter *c* you spy  
Place the *e* before the *i*;  
If you do not spy the *c*,  
Place the *i* before the *e*.

A code word also helpful is *lice*. If you think it too inelegant, *police* will do. Or, if that word arouses unpleasant memories, use *Alice*. The trick is this: use the combination *ie* when preceded by *l*, the combination *ei* when preceded by *c*. *Lice* or *lice*.

(d) *Words ending in cede, ceed, and sede.*

There will be no great strain on your memory in getting the rule for these words fixed. All of the words you are likely to need end in *cede*, except four. They are *supersede*, *proceed*, *succeed*, and *exceed*. Not everything about spelling is difficult, is it?

(e) *Words ending in able and ible.*

These endings are ever-present thorns in the flesh of the poor spellers. Dependable or dependable? Computable or computible? Accessible or accessible? Flexible or flexible? These are the



words, and the others of the group, that so often eliminate the youngsters in their spelling bees; and they are frequently misspelled in business letters.

Most of the authorities offer no suggestion for handling these words except that you must memorize them. However, Grove and Parkhurst, in their excellent book, *English Elements and Principles*,\* come through with a device which should be useful. They say:

Many adjectives have noun forms ending in *-ation*, as, for example, computation, accusation, consideration, and habitation. The rule is: Call to mind the noun form; if it ends in *-ation*, spell the adjective with *-able*; otherwise, use *-ible*.

For your reference, there follows a list of words ending with *ible*. While not intended to be complete, it includes most of the words you are likely to use in your business letters.

accessible	flexible	intelligible
audible	forcible	invincible
avertible	fusible	invisible
collapsible	gullible	irascible
combustible	ignitable	irreducible
compatible	illegible	irrepressible
comprehensible	imperceptible	irresistible
compressible	impermissible	legible
conductive	inaccessible	negligible
contemptible	inadmissible	omissible
convertible	inapprehensible	ostensible
convincible	incombustible	partible
corruptible	incompatible	perceptible
deductible	incompressible	permissible
defensible	incontrovertible	plausible
destructible	inconvincible	reprehensible
diffusible	incorrigible	resistible
digestible	incredible	responsible
dirigible	indefensible	reversible
discernible	indigestible	sensible
dismissible	inexhaustible	suppressible
divisible	infallible	susceptible
edible	infeasible	tangible
eligible	inflexible	tensile
enforceable	insensible	transmissible
exhaustible	insuppressible	undigestible
expressible	insusceptible	unintelligible
fallible	intangible	visible
feasible		

\* Publishers: Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, N. Y.



(f) *Rules for plural forms.*

These rules are not difficult to follow, if one takes time to fix them thoroughly in mind.

To form the plural of a word ending in *y* and preceded by a *consonant*, change the *y* to *i* and add *es*. Penny, pennies

To form the plural of a word ending in *y* and preceded by a *vowel*, simply add *s*. Attorney, attorneys. Day, days.

To form the plural of a word ending in *o* and preceded by a *consonant*, add *es*. Veto, vetoes.

To form the plural of a word ending in *o* and preceded by a *vowel*, add only *s*. Portfolio, portfolios.

To the above, note this exception. Words for musical terms, ending in *o*, are made plural by adding only *s*, irrespective of vowel or consonant preceding the *o*. Radio, radios (*o* preceded by vowel). Piano, pianos (*o* preceded by consonant).

To form the plural of most nouns ending in *f*, the latter is omitted, and *ves* added. For most nouns ending in *fe*, this combination is changed to *ves*. Examples: *half*, *halves*; *elf*, *elves*; *shelf*, *shelves*; *knife*, *knives*. Watch out for such exceptions as: *proof*, *proofs*; *belief*, *beliefs*.

Most nouns lifted from other languages to our own retain their plural forms. Some by common usage have been changed. Examples unchanged: *alumnus*, *alumni*; *alumna*, *alumnae*; *criterion*, *criteria*; *datum*, *data*. Examples with English forms: *formula*, *formulas*; *index*, *indexes*.

The great bugaboo in all spelling rules is the danger of exceptions. The letter writer who knows all the rules might make laughable errors *unless* he also knows all the exceptions. This brings us back once more to the fact that a good memory is the best guide in spelling, and when in doubt we have the advantage of dictionaries which are *meant to be used*. A reliable dictionary on the desk of secretary or executive is usually evidence of a place where correct spelling prevails.

As a reference guide, the following list of commonly misspelled words is submitted. While the thought may be disagreeable to one remote from school, this list is also available for *study*. To memorize these words may seem a terrible chore, but the confidence gained in such an accomplishment would more than offset the trouble. To discover that one or more words have been misspelled in an important business letter is an embarrassment the letter writer should be happy to avoid. Certainly, one of the team—the dictator or the secretary—must be an expert in spelling, to be sure that errors will never be faced.



## WORDS OFTEN MISSPELLED IN BUSINESS LETTERS

## A

abbreviation	adviser	antidote
abdomen	advisory	antipathy
abdominal	aeronautics	anyone
abeyance	affable	apologize
abhorrence	affect	apostrophe
absence	affidavit	apparatus
absorbent	affiliated	apparel
abstinence	affirmation	apparent
abstruse	aggrandize	appearance
absurd	aggravate	applicable
abusive	agreeable	apportionment
academy	aggressor	appraisal
accede	agile	appreciate
accelerate	alacrity	apprehension
acceptable	alias	apprentice
acceptance	alienate	approbation
access	allege	appropriate
accessible	allegiance	approximate
accessories	allegorical	aptitude
accidentally	allotment	arbitrary
acclimate	all ready	archaic
accommodate	all right	architect
accompanying	alluded	arduous
accountant	allure	arguing
accredited	altar	arrangement
accrue	alter	arrears
accumulate	alternate	arrival
accuracy	alternative	asbestos
accustomed	altogether	ascend
achievement	altruistic	ascend
acknowledgment	amalgamate	ascertain
acme	amateur	assassin
acoustics	ambiguous	assert
acquiesce	amenable	assessable
acreage	amicable	assessor
acumen	analogous	assistance
addressee	analogy	assiduous
adept	analysis	assignee
adequate	analyze	assignor
adhere	anecdote	assistant
adjustment	aniline	association
administrator	animosity	assuage
admirable	annihilate	assurance
adulterant	anniversary	athlete
advantageous	annuity	athletic
adversity	annul	atrocious
advertisement	anonymous	attendance
advice	antarctic	attitude
advisable	antedate	attorney
advise	anticipate	attribute



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audience  
auditor  
authentic  
authority  
authorize  
automatic

autumn  
auxiliary  
avarice  
averse  
aviator

avidity  
awhile  
awkward  
axiom  
azur

### B

babel  
baffle  
bail  
balance  
bale  
balloon  
banal  
banana  
baneful  
bankruptcy  
baptize  
bargain  
baring  
barring  
becoming  
beggar  
beginning

believe  
belligerent  
beneficence  
beneficial  
beneficiary  
benefited  
benevolent  
bequeath  
besiege  
bigoted  
billfold  
bimonthly  
biography  
blemish  
boisterous  
bookkeeper  
boundary

bountiful  
bouquet  
bourgeois  
brandish  
breath  
breathe  
brigand  
brilliant  
brusque  
budget  
bulletin  
buoyant  
bureau  
burglar  
busiest  
business  
by-product

### C

calamity  
calendar  
calliope  
cancel  
cancellation  
candelabrum  
candid  
canvas  
canvass  
capable  
capital  
capitalize  
capitol  
caprice  
captivate  
caricature  
catalog  
catastrophe  
caucus  
ceiling  
celebrated  
cellophane  
cemetery  
censure

census  
certification  
chagrin  
chamois  
changeable  
chaos  
chargeable  
chasm  
chastisement  
chattel  
chauffeur  
chivalrous  
chocolate  
choose  
chose  
chronic  
chronology  
chrysanthemum  
circuitous  
circulate  
claimant  
clamor  
clandestine  
clearance

clientele  
clique  
clothier  
codicil  
cognomen  
coherence  
coincide  
collaborate  
collateral  
colleague  
collectible  
collector  
colonel  
colossal  
column  
coming  
commend  
commission  
commitment  
committee  
commodity  
communication  
commutator  
comparable



comparatively  
 compelled  
 compensation  
 competent  
 competitive  
 competitor  
 complacent  
 complementary  
 completely  
 compliance  
 conceal  
 concede  
 conceited  
 conceivable  
 concession  
 conciliate  
 concise  
 concurrence  
 condolence  
 conducive  
 confer  
 conference  
 confirmation  
 conflagration  
 confusion  
 congenial  
 conjecture  
 connoisseur  
 connotation  
 conscience  
 conscientious  
 conscious

consecutive  
 consensus  
 consignee  
 consignor  
 consignment  
 consistent  
 consolidate  
 constituent  
 consul  
 contagious  
 contemptible  
 contemptuous  
 contingent  
 continual  
 continuance  
 continuity  
 contractor  
 contradictory  
 contributory  
 contrite  
 contrive  
 controlled  
 controversy  
 convalescent  
 convenience  
 conversant  
 convertible  
 conveyance  
 copious  
 copyright  
 corporate  
 corps

correspondence  
 corroborate  
 council  
 counsel  
 counselor  
 counterfeit  
 coupon  
 courageous  
 courteous  
 courtesy  
 covet  
 credentials  
 credible  
 creditable  
 creditor  
 credulity  
 credulous  
 crisis  
 criterion  
 criticism  
 criticize  
 crucial  
 crux  
 cuisine  
 culinary  
 cumbersome  
 cumulative  
 curing  
 currency  
 current  
 customary  
 cynic

## D

daguerreotype  
 dairy  
 damageable  
 debenture  
 debtor  
 debut  
 debutante  
 de cease  
 deceive  
 decipher  
 decision  
 decisive  
 deducible  
 deductible  
 defendant  
 deferred  
 deficient  
 deficit

definite  
 defunct  
 delegate  
 deliberate  
 delicate  
 delinquent  
 delude  
 demeanor  
 demise  
 demurrage  
 denouement  
 dependent  
 depreciation  
 descend  
 descent  
 desert  
 description  
 desirable

desirous  
 desperate  
 despicable  
 despondent  
 despair  
 dessert  
 destitute  
 detachable  
 deteriorate  
 deterioration  
 detriment  
 develop  
 development  
 device  
 devious  
 devise  
 devotee  
 dexterity



diary  
difference  
difficulty  
digression  
dilatory  
dilemma  
diligent  
dimension  
diner  
dinner  
diphtheria  
director  
dirigible  
disagree  
disagreeable  
disallow  
disappear  
disappoint  
disaster  
disastrous  
discern

disciple  
discipline  
disconsolate  
discourse  
discreet  
discrepancy  
discriminate  
discussion  
disdain  
disease  
dishevel  
disparage  
dispatch  
dispel  
dispense  
disputant  
dissatisfied  
disseminate  
dissipate  
dissuade  
distinctive

distinguish  
distribution  
disturbance  
divers  
divert  
dividends  
division  
divulge  
docile  
documentary  
doldrums  
doleful  
donor  
don't (do not)  
dormitories  
drudgeries  
dubious  
duplicate  
durable  
dynamic

## E

earnest  
easel  
eccentric  
eccentricity  
economize  
ecstasy  
efface  
effect  
efficiency  
effrontery  
effusive  
egotistical  
eighth  
elaborate  
elated  
electrician  
electrotype  
elicit  
eligible  
eliminate  
elucidate  
emanate  
embarrass  
embezzlement  
emergency  
eminent  
emphasize  
employee  
emulate

enclose  
encouragement  
encumbrance  
endeavor  
endow  
endowment  
energetic  
energizing  
engineer  
enhance  
enigma  
en route  
ensuing  
enterprise  
enumerate  
envelope  
environment  
epigram  
episode  
equality  
equanimity  
equation  
equipped  
equitable  
equity  
equivalent  
erroneous  
eruption  
especially

essential  
esteem  
estimated  
etiquette  
evaluation  
evasive  
exaggerate  
excel  
excellence  
except  
excessive  
exchangeable  
excusable  
executor  
exempt  
exercise  
exhaust  
exhilarate  
exigency  
existence  
exonerate  
exorbitant  
expedient  
expedite  
expense  
experience  
expiration  
explanation  
explicit



exploit  
exporter  
expressage  
exquisite

extant  
extension  
extinct  
extol

extraordinary  
extravagant  
extremely  
extricate

## F

fabulous  
facetious  
facilitate  
facilities  
facsimile  
familiar  
farcical  
farewell  
fascinate  
fatuous  
faux pas  
favorite  
feasible  
fervent  
fetid  
fetish  
fiber  
fictitious  
fidelity

fictiv  
financial  
financier  
flaccid  
flem - le-lis  
flexible  
flipscat  
floccution  
foolhardy  
foreboding  
forecasting  
foreclosure  
forehead  
foreign  
foremost  
foresight  
forfeit  
forfeiture  
formally

formerly  
formidable  
formula  
fortieth  
fortitude  
fraction  
fragile  
franchise  
frantic  
fraternize  
fraudulent  
frequently  
frigid  
frivolous  
fugitive  
fulfil  
fundamental  
furtive  
futile

## G

gambling  
gamboling  
garage  
garnishee  
garrulous  
gauge  
gaunt  
generalize  
generally  
genial

genus  
genteel  
genuine  
ghetto  
ghoul  
glamour  
glycerine  
gnarled  
goddess  
gorgeous

government  
gracious  
grammar  
gratefully  
gratuitous  
grievous  
guarantee  
guardian  
guidance

## H

handicapped  
hazard  
height  
heinous  
hereditary  
hermetically  
heroic  
heroine  
hesitancy  
heterogeneous

hilarious  
hindrance  
homogeneous  
hoping  
hopping  
horizon  
hosiery  
hospitable  
humane  
humdrum

humility  
humorous  
hundredth  
hurriedly  
hygiene  
hyperbole  
hypnotize  
hypocrisy  
hypothesis



I

ignoramus	incidentally	ingenuous
ignorant	incipient	initial
illegal	incisive	innocent
illegible	inclement	insolvency
illegitimate	inclose	installment
illiterate	incognito	instructor
illiteracy	incoherent	integrity
illustrated	incomparable	intelligible
illustrious	inconceivable	intentionally
imaginary	inconvenient	intercede
imitation	incorporated	interchangeable
immediately	incredible	interest
immense	incredulous	interfered
immigration	indebtedness	interpreted
imminent	indefinitely	interruption
impartial	indelible	intimation
impede	indemnity	intolerable
impertinent	independent	intuition
impetuosity	indict	inventory
impious	indispensable	irrefutable
importer	inducement	irrelevant
impromptu	inefficiency	irresistible
inadvertently	inevitable	irrevocable
inasmuch	infinite	isolate
inaudible	inflammable	issuing
inaugurate	influential	itemize
incessant	ingenious	itinerary

J

janitor	jubilant	jurisprudence
jeopardize	judgment	justice
jocose	judiciary	justifying
jocular	jugular	jute
jostle	juncture	juvenile

K

khaki	knack	knowledge
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L

laboratory	latter	leniency
laborious	lavish	lessen
laggard	lax	levity
laid	lease	liability
lamentable	legacy	liable
languid	legendary	libel
laryngitis	legible	librarian
latent	legislature	license
later	legitimate	lichen
latitude	leisure	lien



lieutenant  
lilies  
limitation  
limpid  
liquefy  
liquidation  
literally  
lithe  
lithographer

litigation  
livelihood  
liveliness  
livid  
loose  
lorgnette  
lose  
loveliness  
lubrication

lucid  
ludicrous  
luggage  
luminous  
luscious  
luster  
luxuriant  
lyceum

## M

magistrate  
magnanimous  
magnificent  
mahogany  
mailable  
maintain  
maintenance  
malicious  
malign  
maneuver  
manifest  
manipulation  
mantel  
mantle  
manual  
manufacturer  
maritime  
marketability  
marriage  
material  
mathematics  
mattress

maturity  
meager  
medicinal  
mediocre  
melancholy  
melodious  
memorandum  
menial  
mercantile  
mercenary  
merchandise  
merchantable  
merger  
messenger  
microscope  
mileage  
millionaire  
mimeograph  
miniature  
miscellaneous  
mischievous  
misinterpreted

misspell  
mitigate  
momentous  
monogram  
monopoly  
monstrous  
morale  
morbid  
moreover  
morocco  
mortgage  
mortify  
motive  
motley  
mucilage  
multitude  
municipal  
munificent  
murmur  
muscle  
museum  
mysterious

## N

naïve  
nape  
narrative  
nasturtium  
navigate  
necessary  
necessarily  
necessity  
negligence  
negotiable  
negotiate  
Negro  
Negroes

neither  
nemesis  
neutral  
nevertheless  
nickel  
nickelodeon  
niece  
nineteenth  
ninetieth  
nocturnal  
nomad  
nonchalant

notable  
notarize  
noticeable  
notorious  
novice  
noxious  
nucleus  
nuisance  
nullification  
nullify  
numerous  
nutritious

## O

obdurate  
obedience

obesity  
oblige

obnoxious  
obscenity



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obscure  
observance  
obsession  
obstacle  
obstreperous  
obtuse  
obvious  
occasionally  
occur  
occurred  
occurrence  
offensive  
offering

officer  
oleomargarine  
ominous  
omission  
omitted  
onerous  
operate  
opinion  
opportune  
opportunity  
opposition  
optimism  
optimistic

option  
ordinance  
ordinarily  
organization  
origin  
orthodox  
ostensible  
ostracize  
outrageous  
ovation  
overwhelm  
owing

### P

pacify  
paid  
palliate  
paltry  
pamphlet  
panacea  
panorama  
pantomime  
paraffin  
paragon  
parallel  
paralysis  
parcel  
parliament  
paroxysm  
parsimonious  
participant  
participial  
particular  
patriotic  
patronage  
patronize  
peculiar  
pecuniary  
penalize  
penurious  
peony  
perceivable  
perceive  
peremptory  
perennial  
perforated  
pergola  
permanency  
permissible  
persistent  
personal

personnel  
perspiration  
persuade  
pertain  
pertinent  
peruse  
pervade  
petulant  
phenomenon  
physical  
physician  
piazza  
picturesque  
pique  
placid  
plaintiff  
planned  
planning  
plaque  
pleasant  
plight  
poignant  
poinsettia  
policy  
politician  
politics  
pompous  
portend  
portfolios  
portray  
posse  
possession  
posthumous  
potent  
practicable  
practically  
precarious

precaution  
precede  
precedence  
precedent  
preceding  
precept  
precipice  
precipitous  
precise  
precocious  
predicament  
preferable  
preference  
preferred  
prejudice  
preliminary  
prescription  
presentiment  
presume  
presumption  
presumptuous  
pretense  
pretentious  
prevalent  
prevaricate  
primitive  
principal  
principle  
privilege  
probate  
probity  
procedure  
proceedings  
procrastinate  
procurable  
prodigious  
prodigy



profession  
professor  
proficient  
profited  
profiteer  
profuse  
prohibitory  
project  
prolific  
promenade  
prominent  
promiscuous  
promissory  
promoter  
pronunciation  
propaganda  
prophecy

prophesier  
prophecy  
propitious  
proportionate  
proprietary  
proprietor  
propriety  
prorate  
proration  
prosaic  
prospector  
prospectus  
protégé  
proverbial  
province  
provincial  
proximity

prude  
prudent  
pseudo  
pseudonym  
psychology  
psychological  
publicity  
publicize  
puerile  
punctual  
punctuality  
pungent  
purchasable  
purport  
pursue  
pursuant  
pursuing

## Q

qualifications  
quandary  
quantity  
quasi  
query  
questionable  
questionnaire  
quiet

quietude  
quietus  
quinine  
quintessence  
quip  
quire  
quirk

quitclaim  
quite  
quizzes  
quizzical  
quota  
quotation  
quotient

## R

radiator  
radical  
raillery  
random  
rarefy  
raspberry  
ration  
rational  
ratio  
ravenous  
reaction  
readjustment  
realistic  
realization  
realize  
really  
rebate  
recede  
receipt  
receivable  
recipe  
recipient

reciprocate  
reciprocity  
recognize  
recollection  
recommend  
recommendation  
recompense  
recompensation  
rectify  
recuperate  
recur  
recurred  
recurrence  
redeem  
redemption  
reducible  
redundant  
re-enforce  
referee  
reference  
referred  
refrigerator

refute  
rehearse  
rehearsal  
reign  
reimbursement  
rejoinder  
relaxation  
release  
relevant  
relieve  
religion  
religious  
relinquish  
reluctant  
remarkable  
remittance  
remonstrate  
remuneration  
rendezvous  
renewal  
reorganization  
repertory



## WORDS OFTEN MISSPELLED IN BUSINESS LETTERS 391

repetition  
replenish  
replete  
replevin  
representative  
repudiate  
repudiation  
repulsive  
reputation  
requisition  
research  
resemblance  
reservoir  
residue  
resign  
resistance  
resolute  
resolution  
resourceful  
resourcefulness

respectfully  
respectively  
responsible  
responsibility  
restaurant  
resume  
retaliate  
retaliation  
reticent  
retinue  
retroactive  
reversible  
revocable  
rhetoric  
rheumatism  
rhyme  
rhythm  
rhythmic  
rhythmical  
ribald

ribbing  
rickety  
riddance  
ridiculous  
rigidity  
rigorous  
robust  
roguish  
rotary  
rotation  
route  
routine  
rubberize  
rumor  
rumpus  
ruralize  
rusticate  
rutabaga  
ruthless

### S

sacrifice  
sacrilegious  
salable  
salaries  
sandwich  
sanitary  
saunter  
scarcely  
scarcity  
sceptical  
scepticism  
schedule  
scheme  
science  
scissors  
scoundrel  
scrupulous  
scrutiny  
secretarial  
secretary  
securities  
sedentary  
sedulous  
seize  
self-addressed  
sensitive  
sensitivity  
separate  
sequence  
sergeant

serviceable  
servile  
several  
severely  
sheen  
shepherd  
sheriff  
shield  
shipped  
shone  
siege  
significant  
silex  
silhouette  
similarity  
simile  
simper  
simplicity  
simplification  
simulate  
simultaneous  
sincerely  
sinecure  
sinew  
singular  
sinister  
sinus  
sinuous  
siphon  
sirup

site  
situs  
sizable  
skein  
skeleton  
skewer  
skiff  
skittish  
slandorous  
slatternly  
sleigh  
sleuth  
slipshod  
slovenly  
smug  
solemn  
solicitation  
solicitor  
soliloquy  
soluble  
solvency  
sophistication  
sordid  
souffle  
souvenir  
specious  
specialization  
specialize  
specie  
specific



specimen	strategy	superintendent
spectral	strenuous	supersede
speculate	stringent	supervisor
speedometer	structural	supple
spheroid	stucco	suppress
spinach	stupendous	supremacy
spirea	subconscious	suspense
splendor	subordinate	sustenance
spoilage	subpoena	suture
spontaneous	subsidiary	swath
squalor	subsistence	swathe
stabilization	substantiate	swindler
stagnant	substitute	sycophant
stagnation	subterfuge	syllabification
standardize	suburb	syllable
stationary	subversive	symbol
stationery	successor	symmetrical
statistics	succor	synchronize
stature	sufficiency	syndicate
status	sugar	synonym
statute	summarize	synonymous
stilted	suing	synthetic
stimulation	supercilious	systematize
stolid	superfluous	systemize
stratagem		

## T

teetern	their	totally
tactics	there	traceable
tangible	therefor	trait
tantalize	therefore	tranquillity
tapestry	thievery	transferred
tariff	thorough	transgression
tarpanlin	thousandths	transient
tawdry	thriftiness	transitory
technicality	through	travail
technique	thwarted	traveler
telescope	thyroid	treacherous
temerity	tierce	treasurer
temperament	timidity	treatise
temperature	tithe	trek
temporary	titular	trite
tenacity	tolerance	triumvirate
tenancy	tomato	triviality
tenant	tonnage	trousseau
tendency	tonsil	truckage
tentative	tonsillotomy	truckle
tenuous	topography	trundle
tenure	torpedo	trussing
terminal	torrid	tryst
terminus	tortuous	tubular
territorial	totalize	tuition



tumultuous  
turbinate  
turbine  
turmoil  
turpitude

turret  
tutorage  
twosome  
typesetter  
typhoid

typical  
typography  
tyrannize  
tyro

U

ukulele  
ulcerous  
ulterior  
umbrella  
unanimous  
uncapable  
unconditional  
unconscious  
underwrite  
undeviating  
undoubtedly  
uniformity

unionized  
unique  
unison  
universal  
universality  
unnecessary  
unnecessarily  
unprecedented  
unscrupulous  
unwarrantable  
upbraid

urban  
urbane  
urbanize  
urgency  
usage  
usufruct  
usurer  
usurp  
usury  
utilitarian  
utility

V

vacancy  
vaccine  
vacillate  
vacuum  
vagary  
vagrant  
vague  
valence  
validate  
validity  
valuation  
vanilla  
vapid  
vaporizer  
variability  
variant  
vassal  
vaudeville  
vaunted  
vehemence  
vehicle  
velocity  
vendee  
vendor

veneer  
venerable  
vengeance  
venomous  
ventilator  
venue  
veracity  
verbatim  
verbiage  
verbose  
verbosity  
verification  
vermicide  
vermilion  
vermin  
vernacular  
versatile  
vertical  
veterinarian  
veto  
vexatious  
viaduct  
vibrant  
vibratory

vice versa  
vicinity  
vicious  
vicissitude  
vigilance  
vigilante  
vignette  
vigorous  
villainous  
vindicate  
vindicatory  
vindictive  
visibility  
vista  
vivacious  
vivid  
vogue  
volatile  
vulnerable  
volume  
voluminous  
volunteer  
voucher

W

waiver  
warehouse  
warrantable

wary  
wassail  
wastage

wattage  
weal  
weather



weight  
weird  
weldable  
welfare  
wharfage  
wheelde  
whereas

wherewithal  
whimsical  
wholesaler  
will-o'-the-wisp  
willy-nilly  
winsome

withal  
withdrawal  
wondrous  
workable  
worthiness  
writhe

Y  
yield

Z  
zeal

### PLACE NAMES OFTEN CONFUSED IN SPELLING

(Except for states with sparse population, towns of less than 5,000 inhabitants are not included.)

#### *Alabama*

Abbeville  
Anniston  
Bessemer

Decatur  
Dothan  
Gadsden

Phenix City  
Tuscaloosa

#### *Arizona*

Nogales

Phoenix

#### *Arkansas*

Arkadelphia  
Blytheville

El Dorado  
Fayetteville

Paragould  
Texarkana

#### *California*

Alameda  
Alhambra  
Anaheim  
Berlingame  
El Centro  
Inglewood  
Modesto  
Monrovia  
Monterey

Palo Alto  
Pasadena  
Pomona  
Redondo Beach  
Sacramento  
San Diego  
San Jose  
San Leandro

San Luis Obispo  
San Mateo  
Santa Barbara  
Santa Cruz  
Santa Monica  
Santa Rosa  
Vallejo  
Ventura

#### *Colorado*

Alamosa  
Boulder  
Canyon City

Englewood  
Greeley  
La Junta

Pueblo  
Trinidad

#### *Connecticut*

Allington  
Ansonia  
Bristol  
Danbury  
Greenwich

Meriden  
Naugatuck  
Norwalk  
Norwich  
Stamford

Torrington  
Willimantic  
Windsor  
Winsted



*Florida*

Apalachicola	Fort Lauderdale	Palmetto
Bartow	Gainesville	Pensacola
Bradenton	Lake Wales	Pompano
Coral Gables	Miami	St. Augustine
Daytona Beach	Ocala	Sarasota
Delray Beach	Orlando	Tallahassee
Fernandina	Palatka	Tampa

*Georgia*

Americus	Elberton	Moultrie
Augusta	Fitzgerald	Savannah
Brunswick	Gainesville	Toccoa
Buckhead	Hapeville	Valdosta
Carrollton	La Grange	Vidalia
Cordele	Marietta	Waycross
Decatur	Milledgeville	

*Idaho*

Boise	Lewiston	Nampa
Coeur d'Alene	Moscow	Pocatello

*Illinois*

Aurora	Glen Ellyn	Ottawa
Batavia	Herrin	Pekin
Belleville	Joliet	Peoria
Belvidere	Kankakee	Peru
Cairo	Kewanee	Pontiac
Centralia	La Grange	Streator
Champaign	La Salle	Vandalia
Cicero	Lombard	Villa Park
Decatur	Macomb	Waukegan
De Kalb	Metropolis	Wilmette
Des Plaines	Olney	Minnetka
Effingham		

*Indiana*

Decatur	Kokomo	Peru
Elkhart	Lafayette	Terre Haute
Gary	La Porte	Valparaiso
Goshen	Lebanon	Vincennes
Hobart	Mishawaka	Whiting
Indianapolis	Muncie	

*Iowa*

Albia	Des Moines	Muscatine
Atlantic	Dubuque	Oskaloosa
Cherokee	Grinnell	Ottumwa
Council Bluffs	Keokuk	Shenandoah
Decorah	Le Mars	Sioux City



*Kansas*

Arkansas City  
Atchison  
Chanute  
Concordia

Eldorado  
Emporia  
Hutchinson  
Leavenworth

Ottawa  
Pittsburg  
Topeka

*Kentucky*

Barbourville  
Catlettsburg

Glasgow  
Middlesboro

Owensboro  
Paducah

*Louisiana*

Abbeville  
Alexandria  
Bastrop  
Baton Rouge  
Bogalusa

Gretna  
Houma  
Natchitoches  
New Orleans  
Opelousas

Plaquemine  
Shreveport  
Tallulah  
Thibodaux

*Maine*

Augusta  
Bangor  
Belfast

Biddeford  
Caribou  
Lewiston

Millinocket  
Presque Isle  
Skowhegan

*Maryland*

Annapolis  
Baltimore  
Catonsville

Cumberland  
Hagerstown  
Havre de Grace

Hyattsville  
Salisbury

*Massachusetts*

Abington  
Athol  
Attleboro  
Billerica  
Braintree  
Chelsea  
Chicopee  
Danvers  
Dracut  
Everett  
Framingham  
Gloucester

Haverhill  
Holyoke  
Ipswich  
Leominster  
Marblehead  
Marlboro  
Methuen  
Montague  
Natick  
Northampton  
Revere

Saugus  
Scituate  
Taunton  
Tewksbury  
Uxbridge  
Waltham  
Wellesley  
Weymouth  
Whitinsville  
Woburn  
Worcester

*Michigan*

Adrian  
Albion  
Alpena  
Cadillac  
Cheboygan  
Dowagiac  
Ecorse  
Escanaba  
Grosse Pointe  
Hamtramck

Ishpeming  
Kalamazoo  
Lapeer  
Laurium  
Manistique  
Marquette  
Menominee  
Muskegon  
Negaunee  
Owosso

Petoskey  
Pontiac  
River Rouge  
Saginaw  
Saint Clair Shores  
Sault Sainte Marie  
Traverse City  
Wyandotte  
Ypsilanti



*Minnesota*

Albert Lea  
Anoka  
Bemidji  
Brainerd  
Chisholm  
Cloquet

Duluth  
Eveleth  
Faribault  
Fergus Falls  
Hibbing

Mankato  
Minneapolis  
Montevideo  
Owatonna  
Winona

*Mississippi*

Corinth  
Grenada  
Hattiesburg  
Laurel

McComb  
Meridian  
Natchez

Pascagoula  
Picayune  
Yazoo City

*Missouri*

Carthage  
Caruthersville  
Chillicothe  
Hannibal

Kennett  
Moberly  
Neosho

Poplar Bluff  
Sedalia  
Sikeston

*Montana*

Anaconda  
Bozeman

Butte  
Helena

Kalispell  
Missoula

*Nebraska*

Alliance  
Kearney

Norfolk

Omaha

*Nevada*

Las Vegas

Reno

*New Hampshire*

Claremont  
Exeter

Laconia  
Lebanon

Nashua

*New Jersey*

Asbury Park  
Audubon  
Bayonne  
Bogota  
Carteret  
Dunellen  
East Pennsauken  
Gloucester  
Guttenberg  
Hackensack

Hammonton  
Hoboken  
Leonia  
Lyndhurst  
Metuchen  
Montclair  
Palmyra  
Passaic  
Perth Amboy  
Rahway

Roselle  
Roselle Park  
Rutherford  
Sayreville  
Secaucus  
Teaneck  
Totowa  
Ventnor  
Verona  
Weehawken

*New Mexico*

Albuquerque  
Carlsbad  
Clovis

Gallup  
Las Cruces  
Las Vegas

Portales  
Santa Fe  
Tucumcari



## SECRETARIAL CO-OPERATION

*New York*

Amityville  
 Amsterdam  
 Batavia  
 Binghamton  
 Buffalo  
 Canandaigua  
 Catskill  
 Cheektowaga  
 Cohoes  
 Dunkirk  
 Elmira  
 Endicott  
 Fredonia  
 Geneva  
 Gloversville  
 Hamburg  
 Hastings-on-Hudson

Herkimer  
 Ithaca  
 Lackawanna  
 Lynbrook  
 Malone  
 Mamaroneck  
 Messena  
 Medina  
 Newburgh  
 New Rochelle  
 Niagara Falls  
 Olean  
 Oneida  
 Oneonta  
 Ossining  
 Oswego  
 Patchogue

Peekskill  
 Penn Yan  
 Poughkeepsie  
 Rensselaer  
 Salamanca  
 Saranac Lake  
 Saratoga Springs  
 Schenectady  
 Scotia  
 Seneca Falls  
 Syracuse  
 Tarrytown  
 Tonawanda  
 Utica  
 Watervliet  
 Yonkers

*North Carolina*

Asheboro  
 Asheville  
 Charlotte  
 Durham  
 Fayetteville  
 Gastonia  
 Goldsboro

Greensboro  
 Kannapolis  
 Kinston  
 Laurinburg  
 Lumberton  
 New Bern

Raleigh  
 Reidsville  
 Roanoke Rapids  
 Salisbury  
 Wilmington  
 Winston-Salem

*North Dakota*

Bismarck  
 Dickinson

Fargo  
 Mandan

Minot  
 Williston

*Ohio*

Akron  
 Alliance  
 Ashtabula  
 Barberton  
 Bellaire  
 Bellfontaine  
 Bellevue  
 Berea  
 Bucyrus  
 Chillicothe  
 Cincinnati  
 Conneaut  
 Coshocton  
 Cuyahoga Falls

Elyria  
 Euclid  
 Fostoria  
 Galion  
 Gallipolis  
 Ironton  
 Lorain  
 Marietta  
 Massillon  
 Miamisburg  
 Painesville  
 Parma  
 Piqua

Ravenna  
 Sandusky  
 Steubenville  
 Struthers  
 Tiffin  
 Uhrichsville  
 Urbana  
 Van Wert  
 Wapakoneta  
 Wilmington  
 Wooster  
 Xenia  
 Zanesville

*Oklahoma*

Altus  
 Alva  
 Anadarko

Bartlesville  
 Bristow  
 Durant

El Reno  
 Enid  
 Guthrie



Henryetta  
McAlester  
Miami  
Muskogee  
Okmulgee

Pawhuska  
Picher  
Ponca City  
Sapulpa

Seminole  
Shawnee  
Vinita  
Wewoka

*Oregon*

Astoria  
Corvallis  
Eugene

Klamath Falls  
La Grande

Pendleton  
The Dalles

*Pennsylvania*

Aliquippa  
Ambridge  
Avalon  
Bangor  
Bellefonte  
Bellevue  
Berwick  
Bethlehem  
Brackenridge  
Bryn Mawr  
Canonsburg  
Carnegie  
Charleroi  
Clairton  
Connellsville  
Coraopolis  
Donora  
Du Bois  
Dunmore  
Duquesne

Duryea  
Emmaus  
Ephrata  
Frackville  
Glenlyon  
Hollidaysburg  
Jeannette  
Kittanning  
Kulpmont  
Lansdowne  
Latrobe  
Lebanon  
Lehighton  
Lock Haven  
McKeesport  
Monessen  
Nanticoke  
Nanty-Glo  
Nazareth

Northampton  
Olyphant  
Palmyra  
Phoenixville  
Pitcairn  
Punxsutawney  
Sayre  
Sewickley  
Shamokin  
Sharon  
Shenandoah  
Shippensburg  
Tamaqua  
Tarentum  
Titusville  
Tyrone  
Vandergrift  
Wilkes-Barre  
Windber

*Rhode Island*

Coventry

Cranston

Pawtucket

*South Carolina*

Darlington  
Easley

Gaffney  
Laurens

Spartanburg

*South Dakota*

Brookings  
Huron

Pierre  
Sioux Falls

Sturgis  
Vermillion

*Tennessee*

Alcoa  
Bristol  
Chattanooga  
Dyersburg

Elizabethton  
Harriman  
Humboldt

Lebanon  
Memphis  
Murfreesboro



## SECRETARIAL CO-OPERATION

*Texas*

Abilene	Harlingen	Robstown
Amarillo	Kilgore	San Angelo
Beaumont	Lamesa	San Antonio
Borger	Laredo	San Benito
Childress	Lubbock	San Marcos
Cleburne	Mexia	Seguin
Corpus Christi	Nacogdoches	Texarkana
Corsicana	Navasota	Uvalde
Del Rio	New Braunfels	Waco
Edinburg	Odessa	Waxahachie
Electra	Pampa	Weslaco
El Paso		

*Utah*

Ephraim	Nephi	Tooele
Magna	Provo	

*Vermont*

Barre	Brattleboro	St. Albans
Bennington	Montpelier	Winooski

*Virginia*

Alexandria	Galax	Staunton
Bristol	Harrisonburg	Suffolk
Charlottesville	Roanoke	

*Washington*

Aberdeen	Everett	Spokane
Anacortes	Hoquiam	Tacoma
Bellingham	Olympia	Walla Walla
Bremerton	Port Angeles	Wenatchee
Ellensburg	Seattle	Yakima

*West Virginia*

Dunbar	Keyser	Weirton
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*Wisconsin*

Baraboo	La Crosse	Prairie du Chien
Beloit	Manitowoc	Racine
Chippewa Falls	Marinette	Rhinclander
Cudahy	Menasha	Sheboygan
Depere	Menomonie	Sturgeon Bay
Eau Claire	Milwaukee	Waukesha
Fond du Lac	Neenah	Waupun
Kaukauna	Oshkosh	Wausau
Kenosha	Portage	Wauwatosa



*Wyoming*

Caspar	Kemmerer	Sheridan
Cheyenne	Laramie	Thermopolis
Gillette		

CANADIAN PLACE NAMES OFTEN MISSPELLED

*Alberta*

Calgary  
Edmonton  
Lethbridge  
Medicine Hat

*British Columbia*

Kelowna  
Nanaimo  
Penticton  
Vancouver  
Victoria

*Manitoba*

Dauphin  
Portage la Prairie  
St. Boniface  
Selkirk  
Winnipeg

*New Brunswick*

Bathurst  
Campbellton  
Chatham  
Edmundston  
Fredericton  
Moncton  
Pennfield

*Nova Scotia*

Glace Bay  
New Glasgow  
North Sydney  
Springhill  
Sydney  
Yarmouth

*Saskatchewan*

Moose Jaw  
Regina  
Saskatoon  
Swift Current  
Weyburn  
Yorkton

*Ontario*

Arnprior  
Barrie  
Brampton  
Brockville  
Chatham  
Dundas  
Guelph  
Hawkesbury  
Ingersoll  
Kingston  
Kitchener

Lindsay  
Mimico  
Mt. Dennis  
Niagara Falls  
Oshawa  
Ottawa  
Pembroke  
Penctanguishene  
Saint Catharine's  
Sarnia  
Sault Sainte Marie

Simcoe  
Stratford  
Thorold  
Timmins  
Toronto  
Waterloo  
Welland  
Whitby  
Windsor  
Woodstock

*Quebec*

Chicoutimi  
Coaticook  
Drummondville  
Granby  
Joliette  
Kenogami  
Lachine

Lauzon	Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré
Longueuil	Saint Jerome
Magog	Shawinigan Falls
Montreal	Sherbrooke
Quebec	Trois-Rivières or Three Rivers
Rimouski	Victoriaville

*Prince Edward Island*

Charlottetown



## NAMES OF RELIGIONS, CREEDS, DENOMINATIONS\*

Adventist	Congregational	Mohammedanism
Anglican	Episcopal	Mormonism
Baptist	Evangelical	Presbyterian
Brahmanism	Greek Catholic	Roman Catholic
Buddhism	Hinduism	Swedenborgian
Calvinism	Lutheran	Taoist
Christian Scientist	Mennonite	Unitarian
Confucian	Methodist	Universalist

*Spelling for Great Britain.* Although the words we use tend to retain the same spelling, it is still true that changes may occur in the word forms, their pronunciation, and their meaning. Only dead languages stay fixed and immune to human alteration. Thus, in the United States, a word commonly used in one generation may fade out in the next, and new words are constantly appearing to conform with new customs, inventions, and discoveries. A century ago who would have known the meaning of *automobile*, *radio*, *nylon*, or any of the similar words that you could suggest?

The changes in spelling and word usage which have taken place in the United States since we severed political connection with our parent country, England, are particularly interesting in a study of the English tongue. While the same basic language is spoken and written on both sides of the ocean, there are many differences in choice of words to express similar meanings and in what may be called correctness in spelling forms. These differences would not need to bother the American letter-writer, except that when he sends a business message across, he is quite likely to be accused of ignorance unless he uses and spells the words the British way.

Bernice C. Turner, in her fine book, *The Private Secretary's Manual*,\*\* supplies the following examples of American and British spelling preferences. Because they comprise only a small sample of what would be a complete list of these differences, Miss Turner offers the valuable suggestion that any secretary handling letters to the British should be equipped with a copy of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<i>American</i>	<i>British</i>
canceled	cancelled
counselor	counsellor
labeled	labelled

\* From *Modern Business English* by Babenroth and Parkhurst. New York: Prentice-Hall Inc.

\*\* Published by Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York.



traveler	traveller
kidnaped	kidnapped
worshiped	worshipped
favor	favour
honor	honour
labor	labour
neighbor	neighbour
rumor	rumour
center	centre
theater	theatre
maneuver	manoeuvre
inclose	enclose
inquire	enquire
criticize	criticise

Judging from the above, it may be inferred that the British business man likes to double the consonant when adding a syllable to a base word, that he prefers *our* to *or*, *re* to *er*, *en* to *in*, and that in general, he leans to the more formal spelling forms. When these and other spelling preferences are understood, it seems only common sense that we should do things *his way* when preparing advertising material for distribution in the British Empire, or when writing letters for the same destination.

*Quotations from foreign languages.* Sometimes an American letter-writer, thinking to add a little color to his message, includes a word or phrase from a foreign language. Some of these quotations are so familiar to the American public that small chance is incurred of their not being understood. Almost any schoolboy will tell you the meaning of *au revoir*, and any business man, the meaning of  *caveat emptor* (let the buyer beware). Certainly, if any line is to be drawn in the use of these foreign words and phrases, it should be between those which *are* generally understood and those which send the reader to the dictionary in an effort to find out what has been said. Even those of the former group, in our opinion, should be used only when it seems that the quotation expresses the thought better than it could be presented in our own language.

The over-use of these foreign words and phrases is apt to give the impression that the writer is showing his feathers—a form of conceit never popular with the reader. Since the latter is repelled, the chances of the letter to accomplish its purpose are decreased. There is nothing about our own language that limits or restricts descriptive power. It is full of vivid, forceful words. Many of our best writers find the range adaptable to any need, and never think of turning to a foreign language.

In any good dictionary, you will find a rather complete list of the foreign words and phrases likely to be heard or seen in English



speeches or communications. The following list includes only the more common quotations that sometimes appear in business letters. You will have to consult other sources for help in polite society, or in making love.

### FOREIGN WORDS AND PHRASES USED IN BUSINESS

- ab officio et beneficio*—from office and benefice.  
*ad arbitrium*—at discretion.  
*ad infinitum*—without end.  
*ad interim*—in the meantime.  
*ad libitum*—at pleasure.  
*agenda*—things to be done.  
*à la carte*—according to menu, a price for each item.  
*Alma Mater*—fostering mother, your university.  
*à la mode*—in the prevailing fashion.  
*anno Domini*—in the year of our Lord.  
*a priori*—before, or distinct from, experience.  
*à propos*—in connection with, to the purpose.  
*beau geste*—a fine gesture, an act of courtesy.  
*beau monde*—the fashionable world.  
*belle vue*—fine view, the way ahead looks good.  
*bête noire*—black beast, object or person to be dreaded.  
*bis dat qui cūto dat*—he gives twice who gives quickly.  
*bona fide*—without fraud, in good faith.  
*bonhomme*—a good fellow.  
*bon marché*—a good bargain, or deal.  
*bon mot*—a witty expression.  
*bon voyage*—good trip.  
*carte blanche*—a blank card, full power to act.  
*careat emptor*—let the buyer beware.  
*coup d'état*—a sudden stroke, a successful move.  
*cum laude*—with special honors.  
*de luxe*—a luxury, of finest quality.  
*de trop*—in the way, not wanted, out of place.  
*en masse*—together, all in one body.  
*ensemble*—all as one unit, together.  
*et cetera*—and the others not mentioned, and so forth.  
*ex officio*—by reason of office, power of authority.  
*ex parte*—in the interest of one party, from one side.  
*fait accompli*—an accomplished fact, the thing is done.  
*faux pas*—false step, something not done in good society.  
*fête*—a celebration, feast, party.  
*fiesta*—same as fête.  
*finis*—the end.  
*finis ecce laborum*—behold the end of our labors.  
*grand homme*—great man, grand fellow.  
*grand merci*—many thanks, much obliged.  
*grand prix*—the grand prize.  
*gratis*—no charge, without cost, free.  
*habeas corpus*—you have the body; to get or procure the release of, by a legal writ or summons.



*hoi polloi*—the masses, the middle and lower classes.  
*homme d'esprit*—a smart man, one of intellectual distinction.  
*homme de fortune*—man of fortune.  
*homme de lettres*—man of letters, a literary authority.  
*honneur et patrie*—honor and fatherland.  
*hors de combat*—out of the fight, eliminated.  
*hors d'œuvre*—outside of work, a relish for the meal.  
*idem*—the same.  
*in fine*—in the end.  
*in memoriam*—in the memory of.  
*in toto*—in the whole, the all of it.  
*laissez faire*—to do as they please, hands-off policy.  
*lettre de crédit*—letter of credit.  
*magna cum laude*—with great honors.  
*maître d'hôtel*—hotel landlord, or in charge of dining room.  
*mala fide*—in bad faith.  
*mal de mer*—sea sickness.  
*mañana*—tomorrow.  
*materia medica*—medical material.  
*modus operandi*—mode of operation.  
*morituri te salutamus*—we about to die salute thee.  
*nom de guerre*—name of war, a pseudonym.  
*nom de plume*—a pen name.  
*nouveau riche*—one newly rich.  
*novus homo*—a new man, an upstart.  
*omnia vincit labor*—labor conquers all things.  
*par excellence*—the very best, pre-eminently.  
*par exemple*—for example. Colloq. Indeed? Is that so?  
*par hasard*—by chance.  
*per annum*—by the year.  
*per capita*—for each head, for each individual.  
*per centum*—by the hundred.  
*per diem*—by the day.  
*persona non grata*—person not wanted.  
*peu à peu*—little by little.  
*pièce de résistance*—the main part, the best feature.  
*post mortem*—after death.  
*pour le mérite*—for merit, for good work.  
*prima facie*—at first view.  
*pro forma*—as a matter of form.  
*pro rata*—in proportion.  
*pro tempore*—for the time being, temporarily.  
*quasi*—as it were, as if.  
*raison d'état*—reason of state.  
*raison d'être*—reason for existence.  
*répondez, s'il vous plaît*—answer if you please.  
*sans façon*—without formality.  
*sans souci*—without care (as the services of a hotel).  
*savoir-faire*—knowing how, to get things done tactfully.  
*secundum ordinem*—orderly.  
*semper fidelis*—ever faithful.  
*sine cura*—without charge (or care).  
*sine die*—finally, without a further day appointed.



*sine qua non*—absolutely necessary.  
*status quo*—just as it is, without change.  
*sub rosa*—under the rose, confidentially.  
*table d'hôte*—a set meal, as arranged for one price.  
*tenax propositi*—tenacious of purpose.  
*terra firma*—the solid earth.  
*tour de force*—feat of strength (mental or physical)  
*tout à vous*—truly yours.  
*una voce*—of one voice, unanimously.  
*verbatim ac litteratim*—word for word and letter for letter.  
*versus*—against.  
*via*—a road, or by way of.  
*vice versa*—conversely, the other side of.  
*vox populi, vox Dei*—voice of the people, voice of God.  
*Wanderlust*—passion for going places.  
*Zeitgeist*—spirit of the time.

### 3. Words Often Confused

*Correctness in word meaning.* Previously you read how a typist made a ten thousand dollar error by confusing the meaning of two words; she typed *affected* instead of *effected*. No doubt the mistake was just as embarrassing to her as it was costly to her company. Fortunately, this example was unusual with respect to what it cost, but thousands of similar mistakes are constantly being made in the use of words, both spoken and written. When one of them occurs in a business letter, and the recipient is better informed, the reaction is sure to be unfavorable. To misspell a word is bad enough; to use it incorrectly is even worse.

Another illustration, but a laughable one, is the following letter sent to an inactive customer by a Chicago firm.

Dear Madam:

In looking over our records we find that you have not visited us in some time. We would appreciate your patronage, and like to keep in touch with the customers who *compromise* our clientele.

Our business is, of course, built upon repeat trade, and if in any way our work or service has displeased you, we would sincerely appreciate your telling us.

Thanking you for your past patronage, and hoping to serve you soon, we remain,

Yours truly,

This letter has at least three glaring faults. First, it was sent to a man, but addressed "Dear Madam." Second, it concludes with a paragraph done in the stilted style of 1776. Third, the writer makes an ignoramus out of himself by using the word *compromise*,



when he meant *comprise*. Instead of bringing the lost customer back to the company, the letter only provoked this comment—"I don't have a wife, and I wouldn't think of *compromising* their clientele!"

To be sure, the confusion in words may have been the error of the typist, but the dictator and his company had to take the ridicule. Incidentally, the signature was only the typed company name, so the identity of the real culprit was not revealed.

There are many words easily confused in our language. For example, *allusion*, *delusion*, and *illusion*. You probably know the exact meaning of these three words, and could use any one of them correctly in a sentence, but we wonder what the result would be if one thousand business people were asked to do the same. An *allusion* is an indirect reference; a *delusion* is a false belief; an *illusion* is a false image.

He resented the *allusion* to his book.

This inmate has the *delusion* of being Mark Twain.

The fluttering sheet gave the *illusion* of a ghost.

*Vocabulary limitations.* You know that this book stands for simple language in business letters; you have been urged to write as you *talk*, using the short words heard on the street, at the club, or any other place where people get together. This simplicity is absolutely necessary to the writing of effective letters, but it is in no sense a contradiction to call attention to the advantage of a vocabulary large enough to supply the right word for any thought or shade of meaning. The letter-writer who labors with a limited number of words is as much handicapped as the carpenter who lacks important tools in his chest. He finds it difficult to say what he wants for the simple reason that the words are not available.

Perhaps you, too, have experienced those awkward pauses in dictation—when you searched for a word that would express your thought, when one flashed in your mind that you dared not use because you were not *sure* of the meaning. Meanwhile, your secretary sat across from you, waiting for you to continue; finally you plunged ahead with a word which you knew didn't *exactly* do the job, but it was the best you could remember. Such uncomfortable and embarrassing experiences are the daily lot of the man with a limited vocabulary. You hear him say, "I can't write—I haven't the gift of gab," or some other nonsensical explanation of his deficiency. The pity of it is that he may have the imagination and judgment to write very well, but that he lacks the *words* to express himself fluently.



Obviously, a wide and workable knowledge of words, and the confidence that comes with sureness of their meaning is just as much an asset to a business secretary as to her executive superior. This knowledge enables the secretary to do a better job on the letters she is allowed to compose, to avoid errors in taking dictation, and often to make a helpful suggestion when the dictator is evidently pausing for the lack of the right word.

Thus, the study and mastery of the words on the following list should prove of great value to any business writer or secretary.

### *Words Misused in Business Letters*

*Accept, except.* *Accept* means to approve, agree to; *except* means to exclude, make an exception to.

We *accept* your explanation, *except* that the time of the accident is still not clear.

*Accept, receive.* You *accept* the offer of a new automobile; you *receive* it later.

We *accept* the terms quoted in your letter. When may we expect to *receive* the shipment?

*Acknowledge, admit.* To *acknowledge* is to verify a fact or condition; to *admit* is also to imply some disadvantage or fault.

We *acknowledge* receipt of your application, and since you *admit* discharge by your last employer, we want to talk to you about the circumstances.

*Ad, advertisement.* The abbreviated form is still not approved by the leading authorities, although it is rather widely used by business men. For correctness, avoid this colloquialism until it gains better acceptance, or punctuate properly—*ad.* or *adv.*

*Admission, admittance.* *Admission* refers to the fee charged; *admittance* to the act of entering.

The cost of *admission* is one dollar. *Admittance* is permitted to ladies and children.

*Advise, inform.* *Advise* refers to advice; *inform* is the act of giving information. Business letter writers often say *advise* when they mean *inform*.

Right: It was good of you to *advise* me about the way this letter should be handled.



Right: Please *inform* us by wire when you will come.

Wrong: Please *advise* us by wire when you will come.

*Affect, effect.* *Affect* is a verb, never a noun. *Effect* is used as a verb or a noun. To *affect* is to change or influence; *effect* to bring about, to cause, to produce. As a noun, *effect* refers to a result, condition, or influence.

Right: This new law is sure to *affect* sales.

Right: The *effect* of this new law is plain.

Right: Care is necessary to *effect* this sale.

*Afternoon, morning, p.m., a.m.* Since *afternoon* and *p.m.* (or *morning* and *a.m.*) refer to the same period of time, it is redundant to use either combination in the same sentence.

Wrong: The meeting this *afternoon* starts at 2 *p.m.*

Right: The meeting this *afternoon* starts at *two o'clock* (or at *two*).

Right: Please report at *ten o'clock* in the *morning*.

Wrong: Please report at *10 a.m.* in the *morning*.

Right: Report tomorrow at *10 a.m.*

*All-around, all-round.* *All-round* is correct; *all-around* is not even a word.

Right: John is an *all-round*, capable salesman.

Wrong: John is an *all-around*, capable salesman.

*All of, all.* Unless *of* precedes a pronoun, it is superfluous.

Wrong: *All of* the players were keyed for the game.

Right: *All* the players were keyed for the game.

Right: *All of* them were keyed for the game.

*Allusion, delusion, illusion.* (See page 407.)

*Already, all ready.* *Already* means beforehand, by, or before a special time; *all ready* means prepared, wholly ready.

Right: The letters are *all ready* for mailing.

Right: The letters are *already* mailed.



*Alright, allright, all right.* Only *all right* is correct. The other forms are not words.

*Amount, number.* *Amount* refers to quantity as a whole; *number* refers separate units.

Right: The *amount* of his knowledge is amazing.

Right: The *number* of sales was disappointing.

*Altogether, all together.* *Altogether* means completely, entirely; *all together* means assembled in same place.

Right: The facts you have heard are *altogether* true.

Right: Now that we have them *all together*, let's go.

*Anticipate, expect.* *Anticipate* means to foresee and get ahead of; *expect* means to look forward to.

Right: He *anticipated* the rise in prices by buying heavily.

Wrong: We *anticipate* a big sale of these shoes.

Right: We *expect* prices to rise.

*Anxious, eager.* The difference in meaning is largely one of mental attitude. The *anxious* person is worried. The *eager* person looks forward with enthusiasm. But the two words are not properly interchangeable.

Wrong: I am *anxious* to see that show.

Right: I am *eager* to see that show.

Right: I am *anxious* to know if he will recover.

*Any place, every place, no place.* These words should not be used for the adverbs, *anywhere*, *everywhere*, and *nowhere*.

Wrong: We have looked *every place* for it.

Right: We have looked *everywhere* for it.

*Anytime, any time.* Never combine the two words into one. The correct form is *any time*.

Wrong: *Anytime* will be satisfactory.

Right: *Any time* will be satisfactory.



*Anywheres, nowheres.* Not good English. Instead, use *anywhere* and *nowhere*.

Wrong: The letter is not *anywheres* on his desk.

Right: The letter is not *anywhere* on his desk.

*Apt, liable, likely.* *Apt* implies a tendency to, or fitness for, something not considered fortunate. *Liable* usually implies exposure to risk. It also may mean responsible. *Likely* is used to indicate simple probability.

Wrong: He is *apt* to speak today. He is *liable* to speak.

Right: He is *likely* to speak today.

Right: Money mailed in an envelope is *liable* to be stolen.

Right: Delays are *apt* to be faced, unless we ship by air.

*Around, about.* Do not use *around* in the sense of *about* or *approximately*.

Wrong: We expect to sell *around* twenty sets.

Right: We expect to sell *about* twenty sets.

Wrong: *Around* three hundred attended.

Right: *Approximately* (or *about*) three hundred attended.

*As . . . as, so . . . as.* *As . . . as* should be used only in affirmative statements. *So . . . as* should be used in negative statements, and in questions where a negative answer is implied.

Right: This tire is *as* good *as* the other one. (Affirmative)

Wrong: This tire is not *as* good *as* the other one. (Negative)

Right: This tire is not *so* good *as* the other one.

Wrong: Would you be *as* foolish *as* to buy this hat? (Question implying negative answer)

Right: Would you be *so* foolish *as* to buy this hat?

*As, like.* Use *as* when a verb follows; otherwise, use *like*.

Right: Follow through *as* I do.

Right: Master a follow-through *like* mine.

*As, whether.* *As* is sometimes crudely used in place of *whether*, or *that*.



Wrong: I am not sure *as* he will make quota.

Right: I am not sure *whether* (or *that*) he will make quota.

*At about, at, about.* Either *at* or *about* will stand alone. They are not correctly teamed.

Wrong: John says he will arrive *at about* midnight.

Right: John says he will arrive *at* midnight (or *about* midnight).

*Auto, automobile.* *Auto* is not considered correct for formal letters, but wide usage indicates it may soon become an accepted word in our language. Meanwhile, use with caution.

*Avocation, vocation.* An *avocation* is something done for fun, outside of your job. Your *vocation* is the means by which you make a living. However, the use of *vocation* is usually confined to business or the professions.

Right: He has selected teaching as a *vocation*.

Right: His *avocation* is collecting old prints.

*Awfully, very, very much.* *Awfully* means in such a way as to cause awe. Hence, it is an exaggeration to use it for *very* or *very much*.

Right: I'll be *very* glad to come.

Wrong: I'll be *awfully* glad to come.

Right: The president was *very much* disturbed.

Wrong: The president was *awfully* disturbed.

Right: The road ahead was *awfully* dark, and we dreaded to begin.

*Back of, behind.* *Back of* is an inelegant word combination which can be avoided by the use of *behind*.

Wrong: Meet me at the cafe *back of* the City Hall.

Right: Meet me at the cafe *behind* the City Hall.

*Badly, very much.* Since *badly* means poorly, it should not be used in the sense of *very much*.

Wrong: I wanted to win *badly*.

Right: I wanted to win *very much*.

Right: He played *badly* that day.



*Balance, remainder.* *Balance* should not be used too freely for things left over. It really refers to the difference in bookkeeping between the debit and credit sides of a ledger. For other purposes, *remainder* or *rest* do the right job.

Wrong: We spent the *balance* of the day at home.

Right: We spent the *remainder* (or *rest*) of the day at home.

*Beside, besides.* *Beside* means next to; *besides* means in addition to.

Right: *Besides* your salary, you will earn a bonus.

Right: It is there *beside* the smoking stand.

*Best, better.* *Best* is the superlative form of the adjective *good* and the adverb *well*. Thus, it should be used only when more than two people or objects are involved. For only two, *better* is the correct word.

Wrong: Of the two players, John is *best*.

Right: John is the *better* player of the two.

Wrong: If you must have either Sarah or Jane for the part, remember Sarah learns lines *best*.

Right: If you must have either Sarah or Jane for the part, remember Sarah learns lines *better*.

Right: Of our many salesmen, we consider Jim the *best*.

*Better, more.* Do not use *better* in the sense of *more*.

Wrong: I am aiming for \$500 or *better*.

Wrong: This time we will sell *better* than a thousand.

Right: I am aiming for \$500 or *more*.

Right: This time we will sell *more* than a thousand.

*Between, among.* Use *between* when referring to only two objects or individuals. Use *among*, when the number is three or more. An exception is that *between* should be used if the relationship is one object (or person) and several others considered as a group.

Right: He divided his time *between* the two jobs.

Right: The work was divided *among* five men.

Right: The difference *between* Joe and other fighters of his weight is very great.



*Between you and I.* Never correct. Always say *between you and me*.

*Biannual, biennial.* These words are often confused, especially by typists. The meaning is far apart. *Biannual* means twice a year; *biennial* means every two years.

For every *biennial* sale, we can hold four of the *biannual* sales.

*Bimonthly, semimonthly.* *Bimonthly* means every two months; *semimonthly* means twice a month.

*Biweekly, semiweekly.* *Biweekly* means every two weeks; *semi-weekly* means twice a week.

*Blame, condemn, censure.* *Blame* means to find fault with; *condemn* means to sentence for punishment; *censure* means to rebuke. These words are often misused by people with careless diction.

Right: I am not the one to *blame* for this error.

Right: We should *censure* him severely.

Right: The judge will surely *condemn* him.

*But that, but what.* These two combinations following the word *doubt* are often incorrectly used. *That* alone is the right usage.

Wrong: I don't doubt *but that* you mean well.

Wrong: There is no doubt *but what* he took the money.

Right: I don't doubt *that* you mean well.

Right: There is no doubt *that* he took the money.

*Cable, cablegram.* Use *cable* only as a verb. The noun is *cablegram*.

Wrong: He sent me a *cable* from Paris.

Right: He sent me a *cablegram* from Paris.

Right: Be sure to *cable* me from Paris.

*Can, may.* *Can* means ability or power to accomplish; *may* means permission asked or granted.

Wrong: *Can* I go with you? (Asking permission)

Right: *May* I go with you?

Right: He *can* win this fight. (Has the power)



*Can't hardly.* This combination is a double negative, and incorrect.

Wrong: We *can't hardly* go ahead, not knowing the cost

Right: We *can hardly* go ahead, not knowing the cost.

*Censure, censor, census.* *Censure* means to rebuke; *censor* means to examine critically; *census* means the counting of people or property.

Right: The president will *censure* him.

Right: *Censor* this manuscript.

Right: They are taking a *census* of population.

*Compare to, compare with.* Either form is correct in many cases, but *compare to* should not be used after an intransitive verb.

Wrong: His golf game cannot *compare to* mine.

Right: His golf game cannot *compare with* mine.

*Complected, complexion.* The use of *complected* is a very common error.

Wrong: She is *light-complected*.

Right: She is *light-complexioned* (or has a light complexion).

*Compliment, complement.* *Compliment* means to commend; *complement* offsets a lack or deficiency.

Right: Thank you for the *compliment*.

Right: I hasten to *compliment* you for this letter.

Right: They make a great team; John's weak service is *complemented* by Joe's uncanny accuracy.

*Conscious, aware.* You are *conscious* of things within yourself; you are *aware* of things outside yourself.

Wrong: He was *conscious* of their hostility.

Right: He was *aware* of their hostility.

Right: He was *conscious* of his power to succeed.

*Consider . . . as, consider.* The *as* is superfluous.

Wrong: We *consider* this sale *as* the best of the year.

Right: We *consider* this sale the best of the year.



*Considerable, considerably.* Do not use *considerable* as an adverb, or as a noun.

Wrong: His wants were few; he accumulated *considerable*.

Right: His wants were few; he accumulated a *considerable* amount of money.

Wrong: He gained *considerable* more ground.

Right: He gained *considerably* more ground.

*Contemplate.* This word should not be followed by a preposition.

Wrong: He is *contemplating on* a change in policy.

Wrong: He *contemplates on* making a change.

Right: He is *contemplating* a change in policy.

Right: He *contemplates* a change.

*Contemptible, contemptuous.* *Contemptible* means something unworthy; *contemptuous* means scornful.

Right: He is the most *contemptible* politician in our party.

Right: He spoke *contemptuously* of the candidate.

*Continual, continuous.* The difference is in degree. *Continual* means to occur frequently. *Continuous* means without stopping.

Right: *Continual* rains are spoiling the crop.

Right: The rain fell *continuously* for three days.

*Could of, must of, may of.* The *of* is incorrect, and is used only by illiterates who should substitute *have*.

Wrong: I *could of* done it but you didn't ask me.

Wrong: I *must of* added the wrong figures.

Wrong: He *may of* gone home.

Right: He *may have* gone home.

*Counsel, council, consul.* *Counsel* is legal advice; *council* means a legislative or advisory group; a *consul* is a government official serving outside the country.

Right: This lawyer gave me dependable *counsel*.

Right: The *council* met last night.

Right: As *consul* he has lived in England ten years.



*Count on, depend on.* *Count on* is widely used, but it is colloquial. *Depend on* is correct.

Wrong: You can always *count on* Bill.

Right: You can always *depend on* Bill.

*Credible, creditable, credulous.* *Credible* means believable; *creditable* means worthy of praise; *credulous* means believing too easily.

Right: His explanation sounds *credible* to me.

Right: This letter is very *creditable*.

Right: You must learn not to be so *credulous*.

*Date, appointment.* It is a colloquialism to use *date* for *appointment*. However, the usage is so common among business men that it can hardly be called a serious error. *Date* is correctly used as a noun or verb to designate a period of time.

Wrong: Then we have a *date* for next Wednesday.

Right: Then we have an *appointment* for next Wednesday.

Right: On what *date* may I call?

Right: What is the *date* of the letter?

Right: How shall I *date* this letter?

*Deal, transaction, agreement.* It is not considered proper to substitute *deal* for *transaction* or *agreement*, but here again we have an error so common in business that it may eventually be accepted as good usage.

Wrong: The *deal* was completed yesterday.

Right: The *transaction* was completed yesterday.

*Different.* This word is often used superfluously to show separate identity which is already obvious.

Wrong: Five *different* salesmen resigned immediately.

Right: Five salesmen resigned immediately.

*Different from, different than.* *From* is correct. Never use *than*.

Wrong: Your method is *different than* mine.

Right: Your method is *different from* mine.



*Differ from, differ with.* In the sense of exhibiting a difference, use *differ from*; for a difference of opinion, use *differ with*.

Right: This shipment *differs from* the last.

Right: I *differ with* you as to when we should begin.

*Disinterested, uninterested.* *Disinterested* should not be used to mean lack of interest. Instead, it means impartial, without prejudice or thought of personal gain. *Uninterested* is the word for lack of interest.

Wrong: You cannot sell me that policy, I am *disinterested* and you are wasting your time.

Right: John is *disinterested*, and should make a fair decision.

Right: He is *uninterested* in the new sales plan.

*Disorganized, unorganized.* *Disorganized* describes the situation where previous organization has been disturbed; *unorganized* describes a condition where no organization has existed.

Right: The troops were *disorganized* and in retreat.

Right: The *unorganized* insurgents fought to the end.

*Don't, doesn't.* Think of what these contractions stand for, and you are not likely to misuse them- *don't* means *do not*; *doesn't* means *does not*.

Wrong: He *don't* (do not) like to sell.

Right: He *doesn't* (does not) like to sell.

Right: I *don't* like to sell.

*Each other, one another.* In the past, a difference in usage existed for *each other* and *one another*. But custom has made them interchangeable. Both of the combinations, however, are often incorrectly punctuated when indicating possession.

Right: We meet *each other* every Monday for lunch.

Right: We meet *one another* every Monday for lunch.

Wrong: They toured *each others'* territory.

Right: They toured *each other's* territory.

Wrong: They scorned *one anothers'* opinion.

Right: They scorned *one another's* opinion.



*Effect, affect.* See *affect, effect*. (Page 409.)

*Either, any.* Use *either* to designate one of two persons or things; use *any* when there are more than two. *Either* takes singular verb.

Right: *Either* of the *two* plans should work.

Right: *Any* of these *numerous* solutions may be the one we need.

Wrong: *Either* of these *four* men may plug the hole in the line.

Wrong: *Either* Jerry or Jim *have* the report.

Right: *Either* Jerry or Jim *has* the report.

*Either or, neither nor.* *Or* should be used correlatively with *either*; *nor* with *neither*. The one combination is affirmative in meaning, the other negative.

Right: *Either* Sally or Sue has time to type your letter.

Right: *Neither* Sally *nor* Sue has time to type it.

Wrong: *Neither* Sally or Sue has time to type it.

*Else, but.* These two words are often combined incorrectly.

Wrong: It was nothing *else but* stupidity that caused this loss.

Right: It was nothing *but* stupidity that caused this loss.

*Else, possessive form.* To make the possessive form of such combinations as *somebody else*, add *'s* to *else*. The first word remains unchanged.

Right: *Somebody else's, everyone else's, anyone else's, no one else's.*

*Emigrate, immigrate.* *Emigrate* means to leave a country; *immigrate* means to enter a country. Thus the same individual or group could do both.

The colonists *emigrated* from England; they *immigrated* to America.

John Doe was an *emigrant* from Australia. John Doe, *immigrant* to the United States.

*Enormity, enormousness.* *Enormity* refers to wickedness; *enormousness* to size.



Right: The *enormity* of his crime shocked his friends.

Right: By sheer *enormousness* the tank broke the barrier.

*Enthuse, enthusiasm.* *Enthuse*, while often used in business, is still not an approved word.

Wrong: He was not *enthused* about the promotion.

Right: He was not *enthusiastic* about the promotion.

Wrong: A man who cannot *enthuse* will never succeed.

Right: A man without *enthusiasm* will never succeed.

*Equally as.* This combination is redundant. One of the words should be omitted, the choice depending on the construction of the sentence.

Wrong: These two brands seem *equally as* good.

Right: These two brands seem *equally* good.

Wrong: John sells *equally as* well as Carl.

Right: John sells *as* well as Carl.

*Etc., and.* *Etc.* is the abbreviation of et cetera, meaning *and other things*. It is incorrect to include *and* in combination with this abbreviation.

Wrong: This car has strength, style, speed, *and etc.*

Right: This car has strength, style, speed, *etc.*

*Every one, everybody.* *Every one* and *everybody* are singular in number. Be sure that other words agree.

Wrong: *Every one* of these typists *are* above average in accuracy and speed.

Right: *Every one* of these typists *is* above average in accuracy and speed.

Wrong: *Everybody* agreed *they* had a wonderful time.

Right: *Everybody* agreed *he* had a wonderful time.

*Every one, everyone.* Use two words when the meaning is each individual or unit of a group of persons or things. Combine to one word when the meaning is everybody.

Right: *Every one* of the typists deserves recognition.

Right: *Everyone* must attend this important meeting.



*Except, accept.* See *accept, except*. (Page 408.)

*Expect, suppose.* We *expect* things or events *before* they happen. Thus, it is not logical to substitute the word for *suppose*, with respect to the past or present.

Right: I *expect* to sell more this month.

Right: I *suppose* the plane has landed.

Right: I *suppose* he is now rolling along the highway.

Wrong: I *expect* the plane has landed.

Wrong: I *expect* he is now rolling along the highway.

*Extra, unusually, very.* It is not correct to use *extra* in the sense of *unusually* or *very*.

Wrong: He was *extra* clever in that sales kit.

Right: He was *unusually* (or *very*) clever.

*Farther, further.* Some of the authorities tell us to use *farther* to indicate distance; *further*, to indicate degree, quantity, or time. Others say the two words are interchangeable, and that we may use the form we personally prefer.

Right: I will go no *farther* (or *further*) today.

Right: Tomorrow this point will be developed *further* (or *farther*).

*Fewer, less.* Use *fewer* when referring to number; *less* when referring to amount or degree.

Right: We sold *fewer* overcoats this year.

Right: *Less* planning is required for this campaign.

*Figure, price.* *Figure* is a colloquialism when used as a substitute for *price*. Nevertheless, the usage is quite common in business letters and sales presentations.

Wrong: The *figure* you quote is unreasonable.

Right: The *price* you quote is unreasonable.

*Fine, well.* It is not strictly correct to use *fine* in the sense of *well*.

Wrong: He played *fine*.

Right: He played *well*.



*Finish, finish up.* The use of an unnecessary *up* following certain verbs is a queer though common custom in American speech. A woman buys a red lamp-shade to *brighten up* the living room. Her husband *dresses up* for the formal banquet. And grandpa says he must *finish up* cutting the lawn.

*First began, began.* The *first* is superfluous—adds nothing to the meaning. Use just *began*.

Wrong: He *first began* to lose interest when Joe got the job he wanted.

Right: He *began* to lose interest.

*Firstly, first.* Either form may be used, but it must be done the same way throughout the sequence. However, *first* seems more in keeping with the modern trend toward naturalness and simplicity.

Right: *First, second, third . . .* to last item.

Right: *Firstly, secondly, thirdly . . .* to last item.

Wrong: *First, secondly, thirdly.*

*First-rate.* Avoid using this word combination as an adverb.

Wrong: For a new man on the team, he played *first-rate*.

Right: He plays a *first-rate* game at center.

*Formally, formerly.* *Formally* means in a formal manner; *formerly* means previously.

Wrong: *Formally*, he lived in Philadelphia.

Right: *Formerly*, he lived in Philadelphia.

Right: He was *formally* made president last week.

*Former.* The correct word to designate the first of two persons or things; incorrect when more than two are involved.

Right: Zeke and Bill started as salesmen the same year; the *former* has had the better record.

Right: Beef and veal are scarce, the *former* especially.

Wrong: Brown, Black, White, and Green played bridge; the *former* was the only winner.

Right: Brown, Black, White, and Green played bridge; *Brown* (or the *first-named*) was the only winner.



*Generally, usually.* *Generally* means as a whole, or in a general sense; *usually* means in the majority of cases.

Right: *Generally*, the weather has been enjoyable.

Right: *Usually*, he gets the most orders.

Wrong: *Generally*, he gets the most orders.

*Genial, congenial.* *Genial* means pleasant in manner; *congenial* means compatible, in accord with.

Right: He certainly has a *genial* smile.

Right: The people I work with are so *congenial*.

*Got, gotten.* Some words in our language are more pleasing to eye and ear than others. Neither *got* nor *gotten* stand high on the list, although *got* is preferred to *gotten*. *Got* means secured; *gotten* means has secured. Do not use *got* with *has* or *with* to indicate possession.

Wrong: *Has* Jane *got* the report?

Right: *Has* Jane the report?

Wrong: What *have* these remarks *got* to do with the question before us?

Right: What *have* these remarks to do with the question before us?

Right: I *got* the order.

Right: Sarah *has got* the stamps from the cashier. (*Has obtained* would sound better.)

*Grammar, rhetoric.* *Grammar* tells us how sentences are put together correctly; *rhetoric* helps us develop a pleasing and effective style for various forms of writing. *Grammar* deals with basic correctness of structure; *rhetoric* adds the polish and refinement.

*Greatly appreciate, appreciate.* *Appreciate* does not need to be qualified. It means to value or esteem greatly; thus it is redundant to say *greatly appreciate*.

Wrong: I *greatly appreciate* this favor.

Right: I *appreciate* this favor.

*Guarantee, guaranty.* *Guarantee* is correctly used as noun or verb; *guaranty*, only as a noun. The noun in either case means a promise that conditions will be as set forth. In written form it may become



a legal agreement or document, although the word is sometimes rather loosely used in business. *Guaranty* of title, contract of *guaranty*, act of *guaranty*, are among the terms that illustrate use of the word. However, *guarantee* is never wrong, and when in doubt, you are always safe in using it.

Right: We *guarantee* these goods to be exactly as described in our letter. (*Guaranty* cannot be used as verb)

Right: Our *guarantee* is your assurance of complete satisfaction.

Right: The *guaranty* of title has been drawn correctly. (*Guarantee* of title is also right.)

*Had better, had best.* Both combinations are correct.

Right: You *had better* not resign until you are sure it is the right step to take.

Right: It *had best* be done quickly if at all.

*Had have, had of, had.* *Had have* and *had of* are crude expressions incorrectly used for *had*. The error is especially common in word combinations starting with *if*.

Wrong: If John *had have* worked harder, he would still have the job.

Wrong: If Marjory *had of* gone to the doctor sooner, her life might have been saved.

Right: If John *had* worked harder, he would still have the job.

Right: If Marjory *had* gone to the doctor sooner, her life might have been saved.

*Hanged, hung.* *Hanged* is past tense for *hang*, meaning to put to death. *Hung* is past tense for the verb of the same spelling, but meaning to suspend.

Right: He was *hanged* at midnight. (Not *hung*.)

Right: The picture was *hung* in the hall.

*Hardly, scarcely.* These words are negative in sense, and it is incorrect to use them in combination with *not*.

Wrong: He *couldn't hardly* be heard.

Right: He could *hardly* be heard.

Wrong: I *couldn't scarcely* believe he had sold so many.

Right: I could *scarcely* believe he had sold so many.



*Healthy, healthful.* *Healthy* usually refers to living things, and means that physically they are sound. The word is also used with respect to business, the condition of a market, or of a financial program. *Healthful* refers to conditions that will tend to produce soundness of health.

Right: He is a *healthy* fellow and never misses a day at the office.

Right: When prices get too high, an *unhealthy* condition is sure to develop in the real estate market.

Right: Popeye eats spinach because it is *healthful*.

Wrong: Popeye eats spinach because it is *healthy*.

*Height, heighth.* *Height* should always be used; *height* is not accepted as a word.

Wrong: The *height* of that giant is eight feet.

Right: The *height* of that giant is eight feet.

*Help but, help.* When used in the sense of avoid, *help* should not be followed by *but*.

Wrong: I can't *help but* believe he is honest.

Right: I can't *help* believing he is honest.

*Him, his.* A rather common error is the use of *him* immediately preceding a verbal noun. This construction demands the possessive *his*.

Wrong: We were amused at *him* wanting to be sales manager.

Right: We were amused at *his* wanting to be sales manager.

*Hope, hopes.* Never use *hopes* in place of *hope*.

Wrong: We have *hopes* that he will make a good salesman.

Right: We have *hope* (or we *hope*) that he will make a good salesman.

*Human, human beings.* Do not refer to an individual as a *human*; or to a group as *humans*. Write *human being* (or *being*).

Wrong: Sun-rays help to keep *humans* healthy.

Right: Sun-rays help to keep *human beings* healthy.



*If, whether.* The conjunction *if* means in case, and the clause which follows sets up a supposition or condition; the conjunction *whether* implies either a positive or negative possibility.

Right: Please wire us, *if* you want these tires.

Right: We haven't decided *whether* John is lazy or incompetent.

*Imply, infer.* *Imply* means to assume, insinuate, or suggest; *infer* means to draw from, or conclude from. Writers and speakers *imply*, whereas readers and listeners *infer*.

Right: Do you *imply* that I am trying to escape this responsibility?

Right: I *infer* from your last letter that you do not intend to pay.

*In, into.* Use *in* to indicate place where; use *into* following motion.

Right: You will find him *in* the garage.

Right: He went *into* the garage.

*In regards to.* Not correct. Use *in regard to*, or *regarding*.

*Inside of, within.* Although often seen in business letters, *inside of* is incorrectly used in place of *within*. When *inside* is used to indicate position *of* is superfluous.

Wrong: Our salesman will call *inside of* a week.

Right: Our salesman will call *within* a week.

Wrong: She remained *inside of* the plane.

Right: She remained *inside* the plane.

*Intelligent, intellectual.* *Intelligent* means to have an alert mind. This condition may exist without formal education. Animals as well as human beings may be *intelligent*. *Intellectual* describes the type of a person who seeks culture by reading and study.

Right: Sometimes I think this dog of mine is as *intelligent* as I am.

Right: He is an *intellectual* fellow, more interested in books than in going to parties.

*Irregardless.* This is not a word. *Regardless* is correct. The use of *irregardless* may be caused by association with the word *irrespective*.



Wrong: Demand a payment, *irregardless* of his importance. .

Right: Demand a payment, *regardless* of his importance.

*It's, its.* *It's* is a contraction of *it is*. When that is the meaning, use the apostrophe. *Its* is the possessive form of *it*. These two forms are often confused. When in doubt, see if *it is* could be substituted.

Right: *It's* going to be a big sale. (Could be *it is*.)

Right: *Its* value is obvious. (Could not be *it is*.)

*Just recently, recently.* *Just* is not needed. Why waste words? Omit *just*; say *recently*.

Wrong: He closed the sale *just recently*.

Right: He closed the sale *recently*.

*Kind, sort.* Use only the singular form unless the meaning is definitely plural.

Wrong: I dislike *these kinds* of shirts (or *sorts*).

Right: I dislike this *kind* of shirt (or *sort*).

Right: Many *kinds* of salesmen make good.

*Kind of, sort of.* In the sense of *rather* or *somewhat*, these combinations are incorrect. When properly used in other ways, *kind of* and *sort of* do not require the articles *a* or *an*.

Wrong: He played *sort of* carelessly.

Wrong: His speech was *kind of* tiresome.

Right: He played *somewhat* carelessly.

Right: His speech was *rather* tiresome.

Wrong: John is the *kind of* a salesman we need.

Right: John is the *kind of* salesman we need.

*Kindly, please.* Good usage gives a nod to *please*, although *kindly* appears in thousands of business letters. It is better to dictate *please reply* than *kindly reply*. Since *kindly* means in a kind manner, it seems far-fetched to say, "Be kind and send us this check."

*Know as, know that.* *Know as* is a crude expression, and should never be used for *know that*.



Wrong: I don't *know as* this car is dependable.

Right: I don't *know that* this car is dependable.

*Last, latest.* *Last* means final; *latest* means most recent. Although each word serves a different purpose, they are often confused in business letters.

Wrong: Your *last* letter was not clear to us. (It couldn't be the *last* letter if others might be expected.)

Right: Your *latest* letter was not clear to us.

Right: The *last* book of the deceased was conceded to be his best.

*Last, latter.* When only two objects or persons are involved, refer to the *latter*; when more than two, use *last*, or *last-mentioned*.

Right: Items to be sold are shoes, hats, topcoats, and shirts; the *last* are limited in sizes (or *last mentioned*).

Right: The sale will include hundreds of overcoats and topcoats; the *latter* are especially attractive.

*Lay, lie.* *Lay* means to place or put down. *Lie* means to rest or recline. A word, usually a noun, must follow *lay* to complete the action. I *lie*, I *lay*, I *have lain*. I *lay*, I *laid*, I *have laid*.

Right: I *lie* down a few minutes after dinner. (Not *lay*)

Right: *Lay* the letters here. (Not *lie*)

Right: Let the letters *lie* here. (Not *lay*)

Right: The report *lay* on my desk all day. (Not *laid*)

Right: I *laid* the report on your desk. (Not *lay*)

Right: I *have lain* awake three nights. (Not *laid*)

Right: I *have laid* the papers as you directed. (Not *lain*)

*Learn, teach.* It is incorrect to use *learn* in the sense of *teach*.

Wrong: Losing that sale should *learn* him not to offend a customer.

Right: Losing that sale should *teach* him not to offend a customer.

Right: Salesmen *learn* by experience.

*Least, less.* Use *less* when only two things or persons are involved; use *least*, when more than two.



Wrong: Of the two plans, the second is *least* expensive.

Right: Of the two plans, the second is *less* expensive.

Right: You can go there by air, by train, or by boat; by boat is *least* expensive.

*Leave, let.* *Leave* does not mean *allow* and should never be used in that sense. *Let* is the proper word.

Wrong: *Leave* me try it. (A very bad error)

Right: *Let* me try it.

Right: *Leave* the dishes; I will wash them later.

*Liable, likely.* See *apt, likely, liable.* (Page 411.)

*Like, as, as if.* Do not use *like* to introduce a subject followed by a verb. Use *as* or *as if*.

Wrong: He didn't master the work *like* I did.

Right: He didn't master the work *as* I did.

Wrong: He sold that month *like* he meant to do or die.

Right: He sold that month *as if* he meant to do or die.

*Likely, probably.* As an adjective *likely* has the same meaning as *probable*, but it should not be used instead of the adverb *probably*.

Wrong: He will *likely* improve sooner than you think.

Right: He will *probably* improve sooner than you think.

Right: The *likely* (or *probable*) odds are posted.

*Loan, lend.* The use of *loan* as a verb is not approved by the authorities, although it has gained a foothold in business language, especially with respect to banks and similar financial companies. For general usage, *lend* is much the better word.

Wrong: *Loan* me five dollars until Saturday.

Right: *Lend* me five dollars until Saturday.

Right: The bank will *loan* us the money.

*Luxuriant, luxurious.* *Luxuriant* refers to extensive growth; *luxurious*, to lavish surroundings, as, to live *luxuriously*. Any confusion of these far-apart words is a laughable error.



Wrong: The furniture in his home is *luxuriant*.

Right: The furniture in his home is *luxurious*.

Right: This year the flowers are *luxuriant*.

*Majority, plurality.* More than half is a *majority*; a greater number than half is implied by *plurality*. Thus, in an election one man gains a *plurality* if the total votes cast for him exceed the total gained by *all* the other candidates.

Right: There are twelve on the board; a *majority* of seven is necessary to pass this measure.

Right: Smith's *plurality* was 10,111; Jones gained 4500; Brown, 3100; and White came last with only 900.

*Met, met up with.* The peculiar jumble of words *met up with* is often heard in certain sections of the country. Obviously, it rates zero in correctness.

Wrong: Yes, I *met up with* him in California.

Right: Yes, I *met* (or *became acquainted with*) him in California.

*Mighty, very, extremely.* The meaning of *mighty* is powerful. Hence, it is an exaggeration to use it in the sense of *very* or *extremely*.

Wrong: How do you feel? *Mighty* good, *mighty* good.

Wrong: This new idea is *mighty* interesting.

Wrong: We were *mighty* glad to get your letter.

Right: We were *very* glad to get your letter.

*Most, almost.* *Most* is incorrectly used for the adverb *almost*. For example, you will agree that *most loyal* and *almost loyal* are far apart in meaning.

Wrong: *Most all* the salesmen have reported.

Right: *Almost all* the salesmen have reported.

*Most, more.* Use *more* with respect to only two things or persons; use *most* for a larger number.

Right: Who will win *more* games, Feller or Ferriss?

Right: Loyalty, ambition, initiative, and hard work are necessary to success, but loyalty counts the *most*.

Right: Of the three plans, Bill's is *most* practical.



*Motor.* Now generally accepted as a correct word in either the noun or verb usage.

Right: This car needs a new *motor*.

Right: Shall we *motor* to the convention?

*Much, many.* To express quantity use *much*; to express number use *many*. How *much* money; how *many* dollars?

*Myself, I, me.* *Myself* is not correctly used in place of *I* or *me*.

Wrong: John and *myself* will work tonight.

Right: John and *I* will work tonight.

Wrong: They all left early except *myself*.

Right: They all left early except *me*.

*Nice.* In sales letters, especially, *nice* is a weak word. It is too vague, and has no sales punch. *Nice* price, *nice* terms, *nice* goods—the word adds little to the mental concept of the thing talked about. Besides, in speech and all kinds of writing the word is worn thin. Sally wore a *nice* dress down town, she met a *nice* boy, they went to see a *nice* show, they had a *nice* time—everything *nice*.

*Nowheres near, not nearly.* Cultured people do not say *nowheres near*. It is a flagrant error in diction. Use *not nearly*.

Wrong: It is *nowheres near* time to quit.

Right: It is *not nearly* time to quit.

*Occasion, opportunity.* An *occasion* is an event or a time; an *opportunity* is a situation, condition, or circumstance to one's advantage or interest. Though their meaning differs, an *occasion* may create an *opportunity*.

I had long waited for this *occasion*; it gave me the *opportunity* to meet the man I most admired.

*Off, off of.* *Off* is final, it needs no support. The addition, *of*, contributes nothing to the meaning and is not correct usage.

Wrong: The letter will be *off of* the Hoovens in an hour.

Right: The letter will be *off* the Hoovens in an hour.

*OK, O.K., Okay, oke.* All of these forms are widely used in business, meaning to accept or to approve. *OK* and *O.K.* are symbols



rather than words. *Okay* is a colloquialism which may eventually win an approved place in the dictionary. *Oke*, or *hoke*, is an Indian word, and in our opinion there is no reason why it cannot be used. Some authorities throw all of these forms in the ashcan as bad usage. Others say they may be used except in formal writing.

*Over, more than.* To indicate an excess with respect to a certain amount or number, *more than* does a better job than *over*. The latter is not approved, although frequently used in business letters and conversation.

Wrong: The winner's share will be *over* \$900,000.

Right: The winner's share will be *more than* \$900,000.

Wrong: *Over* a million spectators have seen this team.

Right: *More than* a million spectators have seen this team.

*Over, over with.* *With* is unnecessary.

Wrong: The contest will be soon *over with*.

Right: The contest soon will be *over*.

*Over again.* Since *over* and *again* are the same in meaning, it is not correct to use them as a team.

Wrong: You will have to type this letter *over again*.

Right: You will have to type this letter *over* (or *again*).

*Overly, over.* *Overly* should not be used for *over*.

Wrong: We were *overly* confident of victory.

Right: We were *overconfident* of victory.

*Pair, set.* Some writers seem to think these are *plural* forms. They are singular. The plurals are *pairs* and *sets*.

Wrong: That lucky girl came home with six *pair* of Nylon stockings.

Wrong: Their wedding presents included five *set* of carving knives.

Right: Six *pairs* of stockings . . . Five *sets* of knives.

*Pants, trousers.* *Pants* is not favored as a substitute for *trousers*, but a word so widely used will eventually gain recognition. Com-



mon use does not always purify a vulgarism, however. We doubt that *gents* will ever be accepted as a contraction for *gentlemen*.

*Party, person.* *Party* should not be used to mean a *person*, except in legal ways, where precedent has established the custom (as in *party* of the first part). *Person* is the logical word, since it seems less specific than *individual*. *Man, woman, lady*, are simple words that often may be used, but *party* is too stilted and formal.

Wrong: Can you supply the address of this *party*?

Right: Can you supply the address of this *person*?

Wrong: I am the *party* who advertised for a position in the Evening Dispatch.

Right: I am the *person* (or *man, young lady*) who advertised for a position in the Evening Dispatch.

*People, persons.* *People* correctly means a group of individuals considered collectively; *persons* is the designation for certain specific individuals.

Right: The *people* of our nation are tired of wars.

Right: Several of these *persons* seem well qualified.

Wrong: Several of these *people* seem well qualified.

*Per cent, percentage.* *Per cent* (also written *percent*) is used when preceded by a numeral. Without the numeral, *percentage* is correct.

Wrong: Only a small *per cent* voted.

Right: Only thirty *per cent* voted.

Right: The *percentage* of profit is large.

*Per year, a year, per annum.* Two forms are correct: the Latin, *per annum*; the English, *a year*. *Per year* borrows a word from each of the correct forms, and should be avoided.

Right: The dues are \$100 *a year*. (English)

Right: The dues are \$100 *per annum*. (Latin)

Wrong: The dues are \$100 *per* (Latin) *year*. (English)

*Personal, personnel.* Anyone using *personal* for *personnel* may find himself dubbed an ignoramus. The meaning of the two words is



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far apart. *Personal* refers to that which is private, with respect to one or more individuals; *personnel* refers to a group collectively, as the employees of a company. *Personnel* may be correctly used as noun or adjective.

Wrong: Please refer this letter to your *personal* department.

Right: Please refer this letter to your *personnel* department.

Right: I am told your *personnel* is outstanding.

Right: The study of *personnel* problems is fascinating.

*Plenty*: This word is a noun. Do not use it as an adjective or adverb.

Wrong: That quarterback is *plenty* smart.

Wrong: He was *plenty* disgusted by the decision.

Right: We had *plenty* of coffee, but not enough sandwiches.

*Posted, informed*. The use of *posted* to mean *informed* is common in business. Salesmen are told they should be *posted* on what competitors are doing, executives try to keep *posted* on political trends, advertising men have to be *posted* on public reactions to their promotional ideas. In every office, the word is heard a hundred times daily, and yet it is a colloquialism and cannot yet be called correct usage.

Wrong: Be sure to keep me *posted* about the sale of this new product.

Right: Be sure to keep me *informed* about the sale of this new product.

*Practicable, practical*. *Practicable* means that a thing can be done. *Practical* means a thing can be done and is worth doing. A project might be *practicable*, but not worth the effort. *Practical* things are valuable in actual practice, as contrasted to theoretical things which have not been proved or tested. You can use *practical* with persons or things; *practicable* with things only. A person is never *practicable*.

Right: Our engineer says your plan is *practicable* but we doubt if the benefits would offset the cost.

Right: I suggest that Mr. Brown be paid a bonus of \$1000 for his *practical* suggestion that we set up a centralized transcription department.



*Prefer, than.* Following *prefer*, use *rather than*, *to*, or *above*. *Than* alone is not correct.

Wrong: I prefer selling *than* office work.

Right: I prefer selling *to* office work.

Wrong: I prefer going to Mexico *than* to Cuba.

Right: I prefer going to Mexico *rather than* to Cuba.

*Prescribe, proscribe.* *Prescribe* means to direct, give instructions; *proscribe* means to prohibit, condemn.

Wrong: Doctor Lawren *proscribed* more sleep and two quarts of milk every day.

Right: The doctor *prescribed* more sleep and two quarts of milk every day.

Right: The office manager *proscribed* personal telephone calls during business hours.

*Preventative, preventive.* Either form is correct, but most writers prefer *preventive*.

Right: Hard work in full measure every day is the best *pre-ventive* (or *preventative*) against failure.

*Principal, principle.* *Principle* is used only as a noun, and means a fundamental truth. *Principal* as an adjective means of greatest importance. *Principal* as a noun may mean the head of a school, a sum of money, or the chief person in a transaction. By remembering that *principle* is not an adjective, you can avoid confusion.

Wrong: His *principle* source of income is writing.

Right: His *principal* source of income is writing.

Right: We cannot forget the *principle* that a sale should benefit both parties.

Right: This amount includes *principal* (not *principle*) and interest.

Right: See if your *principal* can sign the contract Monday.

*Proposition.* *Proposition* is a noun meaning something proposed, and its use should be limited to that purpose. Correctly used, it does not mean an idea, plan, or project. Use of the word as a verb is an inexcusable error.



- Right: Your *proposition* will be carefully considered and you may expect our decision in ten days.
- Wrong: His *proposition* (should be *plan*) to increase sales may have merit.
- Wrong: Now that this *proposition* is launched, we must all give it loyal support.
- Wrong: He *propositioned* (verb) me to take the job.

*Provided, providing.* *Provided* means if or on condition that. *Providing* may not be used in the same sense; it is a transitive verb which must be followed by an object.

- Wrong: We can build the house in six months, *providing* there is no shortage of materials.
- Right: We can build the house in six months, *provided* there is no shortage of materials.
- Right: The problem of *providing* food is serious.

*Quantity, number.* *Quantity* refers to the whole amount; *number* to individual units.

- Right: The *quantity* of food to be shipped is large.
- Right: The *number* of boxes must be known.
- Wrong: The *quantity* of costumes needed for this play will make the cost of production too great.

*Quite, very, rather.* *Quite*, meaning entirely or wholly, should not be substituted for *rather* or *somewhat*. Although colloquial, there is no serious objection to its use as *very*.

- Wrong: The audience was *quite* larger than expected.
- Right: The audience was *somewhat* larger than expected.
- Wrong: Although not a failure, the campaign was *quite* disappointing.
- Right: Although not a failure, the campaign was *rather* disappointing.
- Right: (But colloquial) These terms are *quite* (meaning *very*) reasonable.

*Quite a few.* This is a colloquialism and has the weakness of being vague as to number. When a man writes of *quite a few* sales, he may mean a considerable number or only several. Moreover, the expression contradicts itself, as *quite* means completely or entirely, and *few* means a small part.



Wrong: *Quite a few* of the boys are going.

Right: *Several* (or *many* if the number is large) of the boys are going.

*Raise, rise.* *Raise*, a transitive verb, requires an object. It should not be used to mean reared. *Rise*, an intransitive verb, does not require an object. *Rise* is also correctly used as a noun in connection with wages, prices, water levels, temperatures, and elevations. In recent years, there has been an increasing tendency to use *raise* for *rise* when referring to an advance in wages and salaries. Since many of the approved authors are now using *raise* in this sense, it may be accepted as correct usage.

Wrong: I did not *raise* my boy to be a sailor.

Right: I did not *rear* my boy to be a sailor.

Right: John, will you please *raise* that window?

Right: The *rise* in temperature has been rapid.

Right: The *raise* (or *rise*) in pay was deserved.

*Real, very.* Do not use *real* as an adverb; *very* is the proper word.

Wrong: It was a *real* good speech.

Wrong: This story is *real* interesting.

Wrong: The fury of the fight is rising *real* rapidly.

Right: *Very . . . very . . . very.*

*Receipt, recipe.* A *receipt* is an acknowledgment of payment or delivery, in money or property; a *recipe* is a set of directions for the preparation of some food, or for some similar purpose. The confusion of these two words usually takes place in pronunciation rather than in spelling, but in either case the error is inexcusable.

Wrong: I'd like to have the *receipt* for making that cake. (She wants the *recipe*.)

Right: Here is your *receipt* for the payment.

*Refer back, refer.* *Refer back* is another of the many word combinations often seen or heard in business, in which one of the words merely goes along for the ride.

Wrong: Please *refer back* to your copy of the order sheet.

Right: Please *refer* to your copy of the order sheet.



*Regard, regards.* Do not use *regards* for *regard* in either of the expressions, *in regard to* or *with regard to*.

Wrong: *In regards to* the second sale, here are the facts.

Wrong: Thank you for writing *with regards to* your unpaid account.

Right: *In regard to* the second sale, here are the facts.

Right: Thank you for writing *with regard to* your unpaid account.

*Remember, remember of.* Another language habit for which there is no excuse! Just *remember*-- don't *remember of*.

Wrong: Yes, I *remember of* talking to you.

Right: Yes, I *remember* talking to you.

*Respectfully, respectably, respectively.* These three words look and sound alike, but their meaning is very different. *Respectfully* denotes respect for someone else; *respectably* means to be or to act in a manner worthy of respect; *respectively* refers to a series of things or persons taken in order.

Right: He treated his secretary *respectfully* at all times.

Right: He insisted that his salesmen dress *respectably*.

Right: Please answer *respectively* as I call your names.

*Runs, directs, operates.* "He *runs* the business." You often encounter this and similar expressions in business letters, but they are not good usage. To *run* does not mean to direct, to operate, or to manage.

Wrong: John *runs* the supply department. (He *directs*.)

Wrong: He is president, but she *runs* the company. (She *manages*.)

Wrong: She *runs* a mailing machine. (She *operates*.)

*Saleslady, saleswoman, salesperson.* It may do no harm to refer to a woman who sells as a *saleslady*, but to be consistent, then a man who sells should be called a *salesgentleman*. Both *lady* and *gentleman* serve the same purpose of calling attention to gentility. Thus, *lady* rates higher than *woman*, and *gentleman* rates higher than *man*. We have no choice—either business is served by salesladies and salesgentlemen, or by saleswomen and salesmen. Of course, there



is a compromise which is correct for either sex—*salesperson*. But *person* is a cold and colorless word. No doubt, you will prefer to write *saleswoman* and *salesman*.

*Same*. This is one of the “whiskers” mentioned in Section 2— a word commonly used in the early days, but no longer desired in business letters.

Wrong: The coat is finished, and we will ship *same* tomorrow.

Right: The coat is finished, and we will ship *it* tomorrow.

*See . . . where, see . . . that*. Don't *see where* when referring to something you have noticed in the newspaper, a bulletin, or some other carrier of information. *See that*.

Wrong: I *see* in tonight's Journal *where* your boy has been elected football captain.

Right: I *see* in tonight's Journal *that* your boy has been elected football captain.

*Seldom ever, seldom, hardly ever*. Instead of *seldom ever*, which is a colloquialism, use *seldom* or *hardly ever*.

Wrong: We *seldom ever* sell that company.

Right: We *seldom* (or *hardly ever*) sell that company.

*Shall, will*. To express simple futurity, use *shall* with the first person (singular and plural) and *will* with the second and third persons (singular and plural). To express determination, special assurance, or promise, use *will* with the first person (singular and plural) and *shall* with the second and third persons (singular and plural).

Simple futurity: I (or We) *shall* attend.  
You *will* be told later.  
He (She or They) *will* help.

Determination: I (or We) *will* sell that fellow.  
You *shall* listen to me.  
He (She or They) *shall* die for this.

*Should, would*. The changes are the same as with *shall* and *will*; *should* corresponding with *shall*, and *would* corresponding with *will*.

*Sight, sight of*. *Sight of* is a very crude and inexcusable substitute for *much*, *many*, and similar words.



Wrong: There's a *sight of* bugs on these vines.

Wrong: There's a *sight of* work to be done.

Right: There are *many* bugs on these vines.

Right: There is *much* work to be done.

*Site, sight, cite.* Pronounced the same, these words have different meanings. *Site* means a location or position; *sight* means a view or spectacle, or the power of seeing; *cite* means to summon, to quote, or to mention.

Right: This is the best *site* for our new church.

Right: Our *sight* of the mountain was magnificent.

Right: We will *cite* him for bravery in action.

*Size up, evaluate, appraise.* To *size up* is a peculiar but popular activity. If you wanted to be facetious, you might ask, "Why *up* instead of *down*?" But the answer has not been revealed. *Size up* is a colloquialism used in the sense of appraise, evaluate, or to form an opinion.

Wrong: Have you had a chance to *size up* (*study* or *evaluate*) these plans?

Wrong: I *sized* him *up* (formed an opinion of him) the day he came to work.

Wrong: How do you *size up* this property? (Meaning *appraise*)

*Size, sized.* Do not use *size* as an adjective. The correct word is *sized*.

Wrong: Let's keep the various *size* nails in separate bins.

Right: Let's keep the various *sized* nails in separate bins.

*So.* This little word is often used incorrectly in two ways: first, in place of *very* or some similar adjective; second, to mean *with the result that* or *in order that*.

Wrong: It was *so* thoughtful of you to write.

Right: It was *very* thoughtful of you to write.

Wrong: Shaken by the blows, he held on grimly *so* he wouldn't fall.

Right: Shaken by the blows, he held on grimly *so that* (in order that) he wouldn't fall.



*Some.* This is another mite that can get the letter writer in trouble, when it is used as an adverb or to intensify an adjective.

Wrong: He dictates *some* now and then.

Right: He dictates now and then.

Wrong: That's *some* hard serve he uses.

Right: That's a hard serve he uses.

*Sooner, rather.* A common error in speech and writing is the use of *sooner* to mean *rather*.

Wrong: We would *sooner* have the large model.

Right: We would *rather* have the large model.

*Stationary, stationery.* The adjective *stationary* means fixed, without motion, permanent; the noun *stationery* means the material, usually paper, on which letters are processed.

Wrong: How do you like our new *stationary*?

Right: The *stationery* used in our company should conform to the quality of our products.

Right: *Stationary* and weather-beaten, the bench reminded us of college days.

*Statue, stature, statute.* These three words similar in sound and appearance often send a transcriber to the dictionary to clarify their respective meanings. A *statue* is a carved or molded image; *stature* is height; a *statute* is a law.

Right: In our reception room is a *statue* of Abraham Lincoln.

Right: The new first-baseman is a man of impressive *stature*.

Right: Do you know of any *statute* that prohibits us from using this suggested plan?

*Stay, stop.* These two words are not the same in meaning, as some writers seem to think. *Stay* means to remain; *stop* means to cease with respect to action or motion.

Wrong: Please arrange your schedule to *stop* two days in Bloomington.

Wrong: We are expecting you to *stop* with us during the convention.

Right: If you *stop* to rest a day in Chicago, be sure to *stay* at the Hotel Ambassador.



*Sufficient, enough.* The gap between these two words is rather narrow. *Sufficient* means as much as actually needed; *enough*, as much as might be wanted.

Right: Are you sure the supply is *sufficient* (not *enough*) to last until the end of the year?

Right: Oh, our income is *sufficient* to meet actual living costs, but someday we hope to have *enough* to enjoy life a little more.

*Suspect, suppose.* *Suspect* is correctly used in the sense of suspicion. Hence, it may not be a substitute for *suppose*.

Wrong: We *suspect* he will have difficulty because of the flood.

Right: We *suppose* he will have difficulty because of the flood.

*Suspicion.* The use of *suspicion* as a verb in place of *suspect* is an inexcusable error.

Wrong: I *suspected* from the start that he would turn out to be a rascal.

Right: I *suspected* from the start that he would turn out to be a rascal.

*Tend, mind.* In the sense of watching or taking care of, these two words are often misused.

Wrong: *Mind* this press until I return.

Wrong: I'll raise the windows and you *tend* to the mail.

*The above, the preceding.* In business letters, you often see *the above* used in the sense of *preceding* or *foregoing*, as "*The above* paragraph states our reaction as frankly as it could be stated," or "From *the above* description of the accident, you can form your own opinion of its cause." Some authorities object to this usage, but it seems like splitting hairs with respect to business writing. The reader of a business letter knows just as clearly what is meant by *the above* as he does by *the preceding* or *the foregoing*.

*Therefore, therefor.* *Therefore* is a bridge-word which established the connection between a thought stated and one which is to follow. *Therefor* has the meaning for *for it*, as if two words *there for*.

Right: You must understand, *therefore*, why no commission is due you.

Right: Don't worry, plans are underway *therefor*.



*Thing.* Behold the lazy thinker's pet! Since *thing* may be used loosely for many other nouns more descriptive or vivid, it is ridden to death in business and other forms of writing. In fact, some writers are so fond of the word that they often use it unnecessarily. Over-working the word indicates one of two conditions: unwillingness to take time to think, or the possession of a limited vocabulary.

Wrong: Gentlemen, we must fight this *thing* to the bitter end.

Right: Gentlemen, we must fight *rent control* to the bitter end.

Wrong: This *thing* is a Chinese puzzle to me.

Right: This *machine* (*invention, law, plan*) is a Chinese puzzle to me.

Wrong: This sales argument can be made a powerful *thing*.  
(Unnecessary)

Right: This sales argument can be made powerful.

*This data.* In their letters, business men often refer to *this data*—an expression as lacking in correctness as to say *this orders* or *these order*. The noun *data* is plural; datum being the singular form.

Wrong: We will be interested to receive your reaction to *this data*.

Right: *These data* will be mailed promptly, if you wish to inspect them.

*Transparent, opaque.* You can look through a substance which is *transparent*; you cannot look through one which is *opaque*.

Right: This material is as *transparent* as glass.

Right: The paper must be of light weight, but *opaque*.

*Transpire, happen.* Since *transpire* means to make known, it is not correctly interchanged with *happen*, which means to take place.

Wrong: Such an error could not *transpire* if your records were accurate.

Right: Such an error could not *happen* if your records were accurate.

*Try and, try to.* The use of *try and* for *try to* is evidence of ignorance.

Wrong: We will *try and* ship the sweaters Tuesday.

Right: We will *try to* ship the sweaters Tuesday.



*Unique.* The condition of being *unique* does not vary in degree. The salesmanager's plan is unique or not unique. It cannot be somewhat unique, or more or less unique than the credit manager's plan.

Wrong: Try to make your sales approach *more unique*.

Right: Try to make your sales approach *unique*.

Wrong: Your alibi is *most unique*.

Right: Your alibi is *unique*.

*United States.* When talking about the *United States* as a nation, think of it as a singular noun. It is plural, however, when the emphasis is on the states.

Right: The United States *is* not going to yield.

Right: The United States *are* widely different in climate.

*Up to, until.* It is not correct to use *up to* in the sense of *until*.

Wrong: Sales lagged *up to* this month.

Right: Sales lagged *until* this month.

*Very, very much, very well.* It is not correct to use *very* without *much* or *well* before a past participle.

Wrong: We are *very* disturbed about this letter.

Right: We are *very much* disturbed about this letter.

Wrong: Mr. Brown is *very* satisfied with these collections.

Right: Mr. Brown is *very well* satisfied with these collections.

*Very complete, complete.* When you *complete* an undertaking there is nothing more to be done. The addition of *very* cannot make a complete job *more complete*. Hence, *very* is superfluous, and not good usage.

Wrong: We thank you for the *very complete* report.

Right: We thank you for the *complete* report.

Wrong: There is no doubt that you owe the money; our records are *very complete*.

Right: There is no doubt that you owe the money; our records are *complete*.



*Wait on, wait for.* You do not *wait on* your wife to telephone; you *wait for* her to telephone. This error, however, occurs more frequently in speech than in letters.

Wrong: We cannot *wait on* your check any longer.

Right: We cannot *wait for* your check any longer.

*Way, ways, away.* *Way* is sometimes incorrectly used in the sense of *away*. Ignorant people sometimes substitute *away* for *in that way*. A third error in the use of these words is the substitution of *ways* for *way*.

Wrong: She went *way off* to get married.

Right: She went *far away* to get married.

Wrong: You can't talk that *away* to me.

Right: You can't talk *in that way* to me.

Wrong: In the sales contest, John is a little *ways* ahead.

Right: In the sales contest, John is a little *way* ahead.

*Where . . . at.* The use of this combination is a very crude error. It is frequently heard in spoken English but fortunately not often seen in business letters.

Wrong: For a moment, I didn't know *where* I was *at*.

Wrong: You ask so many questions, I don't know *where* I am *at*.

Right: For a moment, I didn't know *where* I was.

Right: You ask so many questions, I don't know *where* I am.  
(Better: I am confused.)

*Without, except, unless.* *Without* is incorrectly used as a conjunction for *except* or *unless*. *Except* and *unless* precede clauses; *without* precedes phrases.

Wrong: You cannot sell real estate in this state *without* you have a license. (Clause)

Right: You cannot sell real estate in this state *unless* you have a license.

Right: You cannot sell real estate in this state *without* a license.  
(Phrase)

*Would have, had.* Following *if*, it is not correct to use *would have* for *had*.



Wrong: If Joe *would have* (following *if*) worked harder, we would have (no *if*) kept him.

Right: If Joe *had* worked harder, we *would have* kept him.

*You, your.* The possessive form of *you* is needed preceding a verbal noun.

Wrong: We understand *you* wanting to be a salesman.

Right: We understand *your* wanting to be a salesman.

Wrong: Time is lost by *you* evading the question.

Right: Time is lost by *your* evading the question.

*Yourself, you.* Do not substitute *yourself* for *you*.

Wrong: The credit for this sale goes to *yourself*.

Right: The credit for this sale goes to *you*.

Wrong: *Yourself* and those other brave lads won the fight.

Right: *You* and those other brave lads won the fight.

*You was, you were.* Only very uncouth speakers or writers would use *you was* for *you were*. There could be no worse mistake.

Wrong: *Was you* a salesman with that company?

Right: *Were you* a salesman with that company?

*Irregular verbs.* From the study of grammar in grade-school days, you are probably familiar with the forms taken by regular verbs with respect to tense and mode. You know that the past tense and the perfect participle are effected by adding *d* or *ed* to the present: *type, typed, typed; walk, walked, walked; listen, listened, listened*. Knowing how to conjugate one regular verb provides a pattern with which to conjugate the others.

Unfortunately, however, many verbs in the English language are *irregular*—so-called because they do not follow the normal forms. There is no aid in using them correctly except memory: *choose, chose, chosen; go, went, gone; cost, cost, cost*. If this puts a burden on those who wish to write correctly, there is no way to avoid it. You simply must master the language with which your thoughts are passed to others or you cannot expect to impress them as a well informed, thoroughly educated person. When you use the wrong form of an irregular verb in a business letter you proclaim to the reader that the message is from either a careless or an ignorant per-



son. His confidence in what you are and what you say is weakened. The letter loses effectiveness because of a needless handicap you imposed upon it.

The following list of irregular verbs is by no means complete, but it does include many that are commonly used in business letters. No matter how sure you may be of your own knowledge of these verbs, it will pay you to check your memory against the list. In doing so, you may be surprised to find that all of your business life you have been making errors which have not enhanced your reputation as one thoroughly grounded in the correct use of the English language.

For correctness in using the verbs not included in the list, there is always one dependable source of information—a dictionary of authoritative rating. There is no better rule for any writer or secretary to follow than this: “When in doubt, look in the dictionary.” The individual who practices this rule will day by day advance closer to perfection; he who ignores it will continue to make mistakes which handicap his own letters.

#### A CHECK LIST OF IMPORTANT IRREGULAR VERBS

<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Perfect Participle</i> (have, has, had)
abide	abode, abided	abode, abided
arise	arose	arisen
awake	awoke, awaked	awaked, awoke
bear	bore	borne
beat	beat	beaten
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
bend	bent	bent
bereave	hereaved, bereft	bereaved, bereft
beseech	besought	besought
bet	bet	bet
bid (to offer)	bid	bid
bid (to command)	bade	bidden
bind	bound	bound
bite	bit	bitten
bleed	bled	bled
blow	blew	blown
break	broke	broken
breed	bred	bred
bring	brought	brought
build	built	built
burn	burned, burnt	burned, burnt
burst	burst	burst
buy	bought	bought
cast	cast	cast



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<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Perfect Participle</i> (have, has, had)
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
cling	clung	clung
clothe	clothed, clad	clothed, clad
come	came	come
cost	cost	cost
creep	crept	crept
crow	crowed, crew	crowed
cut	cut	cut
deal	dealt	dealt
dig	dug	dug
dive	dived	dived
do	did	done
draw	drew	drawn
dream	dreamed	dreamed
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
dwell	dwelt	dwelt
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
feed	fed	fed
feel	felt	felt
fight	fought	fought
find	found	found
flee	fled	fled
fling	flung	flung
flow	flowed	flowed
fly	flew	flown
forbear	forbore	forborne
forbid	forbade	forbidden
forget	forgot	forgotten
forgive	forgave	forgiven
forsake	forsook	forsaken
freeze	froze	frozen
get	got	got
give	gave	given
go	went	gone
grind	ground	ground
grow	grew	grown
hang (to execute)	hanged	hanged
hang (to suspend)	hung	hung
have	had	had
hear	heard	heard
heave	heaved, hove	heaved, hove
hew	hewed	hewed, hewn
hide	hid	hidden
hit	hit	hit
hold	held	held
hurt	hurt	hurt
keep	kept	kept



<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Perfect Participle</i> (have, has, had)
kneel	knelt, kneeled	knelt, kneeled
know	knew	known
lay (to place)	laid	laid
lead	led	led
leap	leaped, leapt	leaped, leapt
leave	left	left
lend	lent	lent
let	let	let
lie (to recline)	lay	lain
lie (to falsify)	lied	lied
light	lighted, lit	lighted, lit
lose	lost	lost
make	made	made
mean	meant	meant
meet	met	met
pay	paid	paid
put	put	put
read	read	read
rend	rent	rent
ride	rode	ridden
ring	rang	rung
rise	rose	ridden
run	ran	run
say	said	said
see	saw	seen
seek	sought	sought
sell	sold	sold
send	sent	sent
set	set	set
shake	shook	shaken
shed	shed	shed
shine (to glow)	shone	shone
shoe	shod	shod
shoot	shot	shot
show	showed	shown
shrink	shrank	shrunk
shut	shut	shut
sing	sang	sung
sink	sank	sunk
sit	sat	sat
slay	slew	slain
sleep	slept	slept
slide	slid	slid, slidden
sling	slung	slung
smite	smote	smitten
speak	spoke	spoken
spend	spent	spent
spin	spun	spun
spring	sprang	sprung
spit	spit	spit, spat



<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Perfect Participle</i> (have, has, had)
split	split	split
stand	stood	stood
steal	stole	stolen
stick	stuck	stuck
sting	stung	stung
stride	strode	stridden
strike	struck	struck
string	strung	strung
strive	strove	striven
swear	swore	sworn
sweep	swept	swept
swim	swam	swum
swing	swung	swung
take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught
tear	tore	torn
tell	told	told
think	thought	thought
thrive	throve	thriven
throw	threw	thrown
tread	trod	trodden
wake	waked, woke	waked
wear	wore	worn
weave	wove	woven
	wept	wept
	wet	wet
win	won	won
wind	wound	wound
wring	wrung	wrung
write	wrote	written

*Hyphenated words.* A little knave is the hyphen. Sometimes he is present; sometimes he isn't. Even the authorities have not been able to agree on the rules to control him. You may find one dictionary giving him the cold shoulder in connection with a compound word, and another dictionary giving him the nod of approval. This confusion spreads, of course, among business writers, who generally are not expected to know as much about correctness in English as do those who make it their life-aim to be infallible. However, do not be too discouraged about the hyphen. There are some guides to its use which will help you. Beyond that you can depend on your favorite dictionary, your own judgment, and the inclination of those responsible for correspondence in your company.

In general, the modern trend seems to be away from the hyphen, except in those cases where the lack of it would violate custom. For example, *son-in-law* is never written without the hyphens, and *salesman* is never seen as *sales-man*. The difference is largely a



matter of common usage. At some later day the dictionaries may define the word *son-in-law*. That looks very queer to us now, but it wouldn't when everybody became accustomed to using it.

This coining of new words out of old words is constantly taking place. At first, because the combination is strange, the hyphen appears; later, when the strangeness wears off, the hyphen is likely to be eliminated, but not always. Years ago a new game was devised in which a ball was kicked by opposing teams, the object being to score a goal by getting the ball to the opponents' end of the field. For this game, a name was coined—foot-ball. No doubt, in the beginning a hyphen was customary, but it's gone now. Nobody writes about foot-ball. The same is true of many other words you can think of—nouns in which hyphens appeared in the original forms, but which are no longer considered necessary. Today, we commonly write *notebook*, not *note-book*; *bookcase*, not *book-case*; *raincoat*, not *rain-coat*.

Toward many other words, however, the decree of custom has been less specific; some writers favor hyphens, and others avoid them. For example, in business letters you see *landowner* and *land-owner*, *policyholder* and *policy-holder*, *vice president* and *vice-president*, and it matters not at all which of these forms you personally prefer.

All right! Here are a few guideposts that you may follow in deciding whether or not to use the hyphen.

(a) In adjectives made of two or more words, use the hyphen if the adjective precedes the modified noun.

It's an *up-to-date* office building.

We are trying a *house-to-house* survey.

He is a *first-class* carpenter.

I am surprised at this *so-called* patriotism.

We like this *sales-building* idea.

John Doe, you are a *hard-headed* fool.

He is a *middle-aged* man, but looks younger.

Death is too good for a *hit-and-run* driver.

It was an amazing *coast-to-coast* flight.

You cannot err in following this rule, although custom permits some exceptions. One is the adjective *worthwhile* which many writers do not hyphenate, even when it precedes the noun.

This is a *worth-while* project.

This is a *worthwhile* project.



- (b) If the adjective modifier follows the noun, omit the hyphen.

The office building is *up to date*.

The survey will be from *house to house*.

I call this job *first class*.

He was heard from *coast to coast*.

The project is *worth while*.

- (c) Use the hyphen to join the parts of an improvised compound such as:

Please *red-pencil* this manuscript.

*Never-fail* Clancey, we called him.

Few could withstand that *one-two* punch.

*Stiff-shirt* language handicaps a letter.

The house has an *L-shaped* living room.

Here comes *pussy-foot* Lewis.

He is a *gutter-minded* fellow.

She had those *moon-on-the-water* eyes.

Enough of these *half-baked* ideas.

- (d) Omit the hyphen when one word in the compound serves as prefix or suffix. Examples: *Bookcase*, *ashtray*, *proofreader*, *flower-pot*, *doorway*, *penholder*, *daydream*, *wallpaper*.

- (e) The hyphen is preferred between two words, if otherwise the same consonant would be repeated successively. Examples: *shell-like*, *sales-site*, *co-ordinate*, *tit-tat*.

- (f) Titles that include *ex*, *co*, *vice*, *general*, and *elect* are properly hyphenated. Examples: *ex-secretary*, *co-chairman*, *vice-president*, *attorney-general*, *president-elect*. However, many business men disregard the hyphen after *vice*, and by custom this practice may now be considered good usage.

- (g) The hyphen is not generally used with the suffixes *like*, *self*, *ship*, *hood*, *age*, *fold*, *holder*, and *ward*. Examples: *lifelike*, *yourself*, *partnership*, *womanhood*, *middleage*, *threefold*, *penholder*, *heavenward*.

- (h) The hyphen is not generally used with such prefixes as *after*, *ante*, *anti*, *auto*, *bi*, *by*, *counter*, *demi*, *fore*, *grand*, *hyper*, *in*, *inter*, *intra*, *mid*, *non*, *off*, *out*, *over*, *pre*, *post*, *semi*, *step*, *sub*, *super*, *trans*, *ultra*, *under*, *up*, and *when*. Examples:



afterbirth	antedate	antislavery
autograph	bipartisan	byproduct
countersink	demigod	forefather
grandfather	hypersensitive	incoherent
interstate	intrastate	midship
nonessential	offstage	outfield
overpower	predigest	postmortem
semicolon	stepfather	subway
superman	transcontinental	ultramodern
underpass	upright	whenever

(i) The following suffixes and prefixes are among those that generally demand the hyphen: *able, brother, cross, great, half, hand, open, public, quarter, rate, and self*. Examples:

able-minded	brother-act	cross-examine
great-hearted	half-wit	off-hand
open-air	public-spirit	quarter-back
first-rate		self-imposed

(j) The hyphen is always used when a word is divided at the end of a typed line.

*Word division.* Previously, you have noted how the typist may help the appearance of a business letter by making sure that it is centered on the page with uniform margins of appropriate width. However, uniformity is only a mark to shoot at, as only by a miracle would all the typed lines of a letter happen to be of exactly the same length. No matter how skillful the effort to attain such a state of perfection, some variations are bound to be necessary.

Only half of the problem exists in setting the left-hand margin. Some judgment is essential in determining how wide to make this margin, but once the first line is typed, all the others except those purposely indented are sure to be in perfect alignment. The machine automatically takes care of that. Keeping the right-hand margin approximately even is a much more difficult job. The first line of copy becomes a guide for the rest, and in trying to make them uniform, the typist can only do her best. She must take the words in the order dictated, and a long one appearing at the end of a line may cause trouble. The simple solution is to substitute a shorter word of the same meaning, but few transcribers have the authority to tamper with dictated copy. Thus, only three possibilities are present. The word may be carried over to another line, leaving too much space; it may be typed in full, causing a projection beyond the marginal line; or it may be hyphenated so that only part is carried forward.

The last of the three possibilities mentioned—word division—is the best, but it, too, has certain objections that need to be over-



come. Too many end-of-the-line divisions mar the appearance of a letter. They also tend to interfere with the ease of reading. Furthermore, an error in word division may produce the same unfavorable reaction as a misspelled word. For the last-mentioned reason, perhaps more than any other, it is imperative that a secretary or typist should know as well how to *divide* words as to *spell* them.

Another obstacle to good margin-making, and one about which little can be done, is that some business executives will not permit any syllabification of line-ending words. We can understand this attitude on the part of an executive who has had to endure an overdose of word division from some careless secretary, but generally the device is so helpful in improving letter appearance that there seems no sound reason for taking an arbitrary stand against it.

In order to grasp the importance of intelligent word division in achieving uniform right-hand margins for every letter you may examine the samples shown below, see (1) and (2). The copy is exactly the same, with not a word moved or transplanted; but, the one right-hand margin is left jagged and unsightly by the lack of certain word divisions which appear in the other. Any error in correctness would have been a serious flaw, but since the few words involved have been split properly, you will no doubt agree that the second typing of the letter makes a far better appearance than the first. Go ahead and inspect them, and form your own opinion.

(1)

Dear John:

The main reason that I wanted your address was to send you mine, in order that I might not miss seeing you if you happened through Colorado Springs anytime in the future. They are having a big confab here at the Broadmor now, but insist you are not present.

During the past, I often have thought about you. Our association has been worth a great deal to me, in addition to being a very pleasant one. I hope someday we may have the opportunity of sitting down and sorta lick the chops of memory together.

I am still a bachelor, and my brother and I have just taken bachelor quarters. That means you have a place to stay anytime you are here. Please remember me to the wife.

Sincerely yours,

(2)

Dear John:

The main reason that I wanted your address was to send you mine, in order that I might not miss seeing you if you hap-



pened through Colorado Springs anytime in the future. They are having a big confab here at the Broadmor now, but insist you are not present.

During the past, I often have thought about you. Our association has been worth a great deal to me, in addition to being a very pleasant one. I hope someday we may have the opportunity of sitting down and sorta lick the chops of memory together.

I am still a bachelor, and my brother and I have just taken bachelor quarters. That means you have a place to stay anytime you are here. Please remember me to the wife.

Sincerely yours,

So much for the demonstration! What are the rules for word division, or syllabification? Well, they are simple but important, and the letter writer *should know them*. Please remember, too, that as given below, they apply only to typewritten copy.

(1) Words can only be divided between syllables. When in doubt about a particular word, the dictionary will supply the answer.

(2) Never divide a word of one syllable even if the length disturbs the evenness of the margin. For example, *through* might make a line longer than desired, or shorter if carried over to the next one, but the word cannot be broken, nor can any other word of one syllable.

(3) Short words of four or five letters, even if they contain more than one syllable, should not be divided. There is no real necessity for doing so, since short words cannot greatly change the length of a line. Examples: *piano, poem, opera, iron, area, data, even, open, money*.

(4) Avoid separating a syllable of one or two letters from the rest of the word. In some cases, this may be done, but it is generally not a good practice. Examples: *again, elect, enough, avid, eager, quiet, around, forty, unique*. Exceptions might be: *until, owing, occur, going, being*, and similar words in which the short syllable carries the burden of the meaning.

(5) The addition of the past tense to a word often does not mean an extra syllable. Examples: *shipped, purchased, ordered*. Thus, *ship* could not properly be left on one line, and *ped* carried over to the next. Of course, some words do get an extra syllable in the past tense: *heated, beaten, exceeded, dated, discounted, divided*. Generally, it is preferable not to separate the child from its parent. Little space is saved by the mere shifting of *en* or *ed* to the lower line.

(6) Usually it is better to use a syllable of one letter to end a



line than to begin one. Examples: *Irrevo-cable*, not *irrev-ocable*; *presi-dent*, not *pres-ident*; *dele-gate*, not *del-egate*; *analy-sis*, not *anal-ysis*. Two exceptions may be noted. First, in the case of a word in which two vowels are pronounced, such as *extenu-ation* (not *extenua-tion*), *cre-ation* (not *crea-tion*), *medi-ation* (not *media-tion*), the break comes between the two vowels. Second, words ending in *able*, *ible*, and *ical*, are best broken between the stem and these parts. Examples: *charge-able*, not *chargea-ble*; *irresist-ible*, not *irresisti-ble*; *polit-ical*, not *politi-cal*.

(7) When the addition of a syllable has doubled the consonants, divide the word between them. Examples: *ship-ping*, *plan-ning*, *omit-ted*.

(8) Compound words should be divided at the hyphen, and never between the syllables of either part. Examples: *self-imposed*, never *self-im-posed*; *stout-hearted*, never *stout-heart-ed*.

(9) Unless absolutely necessary, do not divide proper nouns or the initials from the last name of an individual. Examples: *North Philadelphia*, not *North Phila-delphia*; *Pennsylvania*, not *Penn-sylvania*; *I. C. Barton*, not *I. C. . . . Barton*, or *I. C. Bar-ton*.

(10) Try not to separate a person's name from his title.

(11) Do not divide a sequence of letters standing for an association or society. Examples: *Y.W.C.A.*, *N.A.R.E.B.*, *D.A.R.*

(12) Do not carry over a designation of degree or title. Examples: *LL.B.*, *M.D.*, *Ph.D.*, *Treas.*, *V.P.* If the title comes first, do not leave it at the end of one line with the name on the next. For example, *Hon.* on one line, *John Doe* on the next.

(13) Try not to divide words which stand for numbers. Examples: *eleven*, not *e-leven*; *forty*, not *for-ty*; *sixteen*, not *six-teen*. An exception is a number of several words, such as *nine hundred and fifty*. Neither *hundred* nor *fifty* would look well divided by a hyphen, but a division between *hundred* and *and* would be quite satisfactory.

(14) A poor appearance results from dividing words at the end of consecutive lines, or from too many hyphens in the same letter. Hyphens at the end of three consecutive lines are never pleasing and should be avoided.

(15) Do not divide a word coming at the end of the last sentence in a paragraph.

The above suggested rules when heeded, will contribute to the appearance and readability of a business letter, but not all of them are arbitrary or unbreakable under special circumstances. An effort should be made to keep the number of word divisions as low as possible. The expert secretary or typist has the knack, too, of securing a regular right-hand margin without many separations.



*How to write numbers.* A typist may sometimes be confused when it comes to writing a number. Should it be spelled out, or should she use figures? The following suggestions will be helpful when any doubt exists as to correctness for a particular situation. These suggestions are not to be taken as absolute, but in general they represent a consistent style for business purposes.

(1) Spell numbers of less than one hundred; use figures for numbers above one hundred.

We have *forty-nine* salesmen.

We have *149* salesmen.

This is a general rule which yields to certain exceptions.

(2) Spell out round numbers.

We expect an audience of *about two hundred*.

We have approximately *a thousand* orders.

(3) Do not begin a sentence with figures.

Wrong: *20* applications have been received.

Right: *Twenty* applications have been received.

(4) When several numbers occur in the same sentence, use figures for all of them, even if some are below one hundred.

We shipped *90* orders Monday, *123* orders Tuesday, and *101* orders Wednesday.

(5) Figures are commonly used for degrees of temperature, scores, money totals, telephone numbers, measures, dimensions, and similar identifications.

The temperature rose to *99* degrees.

The final score was Illinois *33*, Ohio *7*.

You now owe us \$*241.56*.

Our telephone number is Evergreen *9079*. (Note that *Evergreen* is spelled out.)

You may ship *50* gallons of the best quality.

The picture is *8* by *10* inches.

(6) Use figures with *per cent*.

Our sales are up *23 per cent* this month.



(7) Use figures when a number is preceded by a noun or abbreviations which indicate place in a sequence.

Act *III*; Scene *1* will be rehearsed tonight.

He has Room *717* at the Palmer House.

This is Section *5* of the Handbook.

Hand me Volume *III*.

This is Rule *7* for writing numbers.

(8) Fractions should be spelled out except in specifications or tabulations.

We have made *one third* of our quota.

The stadium was *three fourths* filled.

(9) Use figures and hyphens in unit modifiers.

We will need a *10-gallon* container.

He kicked the goal from a *45-degree* angle.

We will use *6-inch* boards on the floor.

(10) In business letters, figures are used for years—in the body as well as in the date line. The rare exception gives an impression of formality which is not pleasing.

He started with the company in *1936*.

(11) Months are spelled out. Contractions such as *6/20/46* are not recommended either for the date line, or in the body of a letter. They are not objectionable in tabulations, or in bills and statements.

He left the company last *December*.

We shipped your order *June 20*. (Not *6/20*)

(12) Days are commonly designated by figures, and a figure must be used when a year is also named. When there is no year, some writers prefer to spell out the day.

Wrong: July *second*, 1947.

Right: July *2*, 1947.

Right: He will report *August 1*.



Right: He will report the *1st* of August.

Right: He will report the *first* of August.

(13) It is best to write hours in full, unless minutes are also included.

Right: The meeting begins at *ten* o'clock.

Right: The meeting begins at *10:15 a.m.*

Right: The train leaves at *noon* every day. (Better than *12 a.m.*)

(14) When using a number to designate year of graduation, the correct form is an apostrophe followed by the last two figures. Another more formal way is to use *class of* and the entire number.

John William Doe, '36.

John William Doe, *class of 1936*.

(15) When two numbers are used consecutively, it is best to use figures for one and spell the other. The choice is left to the dictator or typist.

Buy *50 three-cent* stamps.

Buy *fifty 3¢* stamps.

When it seems that figures must be used for both numbers, a comma must be placed between them; or better still, the sentence can be dictated to place them farther apart.

In *1947, 365* people were killed in accidents.

In *1947*, accidents caused the deaths of *365* people.

(16) Ages are commonly spelled out in business letters unless the number is long, or months and days are included.

He will be *ten* years old next month.

It is hard to believe he is *78* years old.

She is *6* years, *5* months, *14* days old.

(17) Four-figure numbers should not be written in hundreds.

Wrong: Seventeen hundred forty-nine.

Right: One thousand seven hundred forty-nine.



(18) Do not use ciphers to designate no cents, unless a comparison makes it necessary.

Wrong: That rug sells for \$89.00.

Right: That rug sells for \$89.

Right: You may buy this radio for \$95.

Right: The correct price is \$12.25 and not \$12.00 as you thought.

(19) Do not use the dollar sign in writing sums of less than one dollar.

Wrong: Butter is selling at \$.65.

Right: Butter is selling at 65¢.

Right: Butter is selling at *sixty-five cents*.

(20) A common error in business letters is to spell out a sum and then to repeat the figure in parentheses. This is another of the old customs for which there seems to be no modern need, unless in legal instruments or writing.

Wrong: Our best price is *twenty dollars* (\$20) subject to change without notice.

Right: Our best price is \$20, subject to change without notice.

Right: Our price is *twenty dollars*, subject to change without notice.

When both designations are considered necessary in a legal form of writing, place the figures in parentheses immediately after the expression they repeat.

Wrong: Fifty (\$50) dollars.

Right: Fifty dollars (\$50).

#### 4. Abbreviations

*Why are words abbreviated?* We can think of no good that is accomplished by abbreviations except conservation of time and space. It is quicker to say, to write, or to read *c.o.d.*, than *cash on delivery*. Thus, it might be possible to develop a whole language of abbreviations, and throw all regular words out the window. But who would want to dictate a letter with such coded expressions,



and who would care to read it? There is no color or force left in an abbreviated word, it remains only a symbol by which the fragment of a thought is transmitted. If the object of the abbreviation is to relay information as speedily as possible, with no idea of persuasion or influencing human behavior, then a certain amount of usefulness must be conceded. Beyond that gain in time, however, no argument is left for an abbreviation, except that it requires less space than does its daddy, the complete word.

In our investigation of the parts of a letter outside the body, you have seen how abbreviations may sometimes be used to advantage in firm names, in the use of titles, and for other similar purposes. Often, they shorten the lines of the inside address, or those printed in the letterhead; in both cases they tend to create uniformity and balance. Granted that the word *Company* looks better in print than *Co.*, there is a sound reason for the abbreviation if the firm name is very long. In the same way the substitution of & for *and* may at times be just as logical. Titles, too, would often string across the page were it not for permissible abbreviations. Who would prefer to type in the inside address, *Master in Business Administration* or *Doctor of Philosophy* when he has the privilege of substituting M. B. A. or Ph.D. without sacrifice of meaning or courtesy?

Moreover, there are certain abbreviations used in business which have become as familiar as the words from which they are derived, and since they do save time and space, it would be foolish to say they should be outlawed. You know what they are:

	<i>Complete Word</i>
a/c	account
B/L	bill of lading
B/P	bills payable
B/R	bills receivable
c.o.d.	cash on delivery
f.o.b.	free on board
hp.	horsepower
L/C	letter of credit
m.p.h.	miles per hour
N.P.	no protest
R.F.D.	Rural Free Delivery
R.S.V.P.	Reply if you please

And to those old stand-bys you can add many others. They have their place in business, and no doubt we will continue to use them.

*Disadvantages in body of letter.* When we think of abbreviations in the body of the business letter, there is little that can be said in their favor. In fact, the good they might do is so far out-weighted



by the harm that we strongly recommend you use them only when absolutely necessary.

The emphasis in a business letter is seldom one of merely passing information from writer to reader, briefly and bluntly, in the shortest way possible. As a rule, an effort is being made to accomplish some important purpose—to sell goods, to revive an inactive customer, to collect money, to adjust a complaint, or to encourage a feeling of goodwill which may later lead to orders. In none of these objectives is speed the first essential. Far from it. Instead, the writer is willing to take as much time as necessary to do a successful job. He is particularly anxious to avoid anything in his dictation which might give the impression of a hurried effort to finish an unimportant chore.

There are certain types of routine letters in which some of the more commonly understood abbreviations may fit nicely, but not nearly as many of them as you might think. Even the most commonplace note to a customer or dealer should be tinged with a tone of courtesy and appreciation. Furthermore, it should be written in simple, natural, informal language—qualities which abbreviations tend to work more *against* than *for*. Yes, we would be quite happy to see a law passed prohibiting *any* abbreviation in the body of a business letter, and the gain would surely offset any possible loss.

If you differ, as you may, then at least you will accede to certain logical limitations. First, an abbreviation appearing in the body of a business letter must be in the *correct* form. Second, it should conform to *good taste*, and not offend the reader. Third, it should be commonly *understood* in business practice, and not one that makes the reader scurry to the dictionary for decoding. Unfortunately, many of the abbreviations met in business letters do not conform to these three standards. Some are *incorrect*, some are *offensive*, and some are *not understood*. Consequently, like a misspelled or misused word, they tend to arouse negative reader reactions.

Correctness in the use of abbreviations need not present a serious problem to the careful letter writer or his secretary. When in doubt, they can consult either an unabridged dictionary, or the very fine list which appears in the *United States Government Printing Office Style Manual*. Another useful source is the list of abbreviations which follow shortly. It contains all of the forms you are likely to need in daily business correspondence.

Confining the abbreviations used to those in good taste and not likely to offend the reader, is an aim somewhat more intangible. One never knows what the attitude of a particular individual may



be toward all abbreviations, or toward specific ones. Many people, for example, do not approve the use of *Xmas* for *Christmas*. A holiday message to any one of this group, even if written with the best of intentions, would be irritating if it wished the recipient a "Merry Xmas." Certainly, almost any cultured person would react unfavorably to a letter which began: *Dear Gent's, Y'rs rec'd, & pd. to att'n of our Adv. Mgr.* If the other short-cuts didn't do the trick, *Gent's* would.

It is safe to say that the danger of making the wrong impression increases in proportion to the number of abbreviations used in any one letter. An over-abundance indicates that the writer was in a big hurry to get the job done—not at all concerned about the appearance or style of his message. Result, the reader feels he has not been approached with proper respect, and that the matters discussed can't be very important.

Making sure that the abbreviations will be understood *easily* is not as simple as it sounds. There is always a tendency on the part of one human being to think that a thing understood by him will be just as clear to others. Listen to a physician talking to a patient, or to a lawyer talking to anybody, and you will quickly spot this tendency. And business men, too, are victims of it! For example, an executive of long experience might score 100 in defining the following twenty abbreviations, but would the average person do as well?

a.a.r.	anon.	assmt.
B/G	b.h.p.	B/L
B.V.Sc.	c.a.f.	c.l.
c.o.d.	C.W.	ex. int.
f.w.d.	i.v.	J/A
L/C	pm.	rm.
stg.		T/L

No, we doubt if one out of a hundred persons chosen at random on the street would know the meaning of those twenty abbreviations. Yet these are the persons who represent the customers and prospects likely to receive business letters from a typical company. Accept this, then, as a fundamental rule applying to the body of a business letter: *Never use an abbreviation unless you are positive the man who is to read the letter will know its meaning.*

Obviously, this rule does not bar the use of abbreviations which by general usage have become as familiar to the layman as the complete words in his vocabulary. Common sense tells us what these abbreviations are: *Jr.* for *Junior*, *Mr.* for *Mister*, *Mrs.* for *Mistress*, *Dr.* for *Doctor*, and the others of the same classification.



The list which follows is submitted as a reference guide, and there is no intention of giving blanket approval to the use of the abbreviations in it. The majority of them are not generally known, and should not be woven into the body of any business letter. Nevertheless, we need to know what these abbreviations are in order not to be stumped when one of them does appear in a business communication.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### A

<i>@</i> , at (referring to price)	adv. or advt., advertisement
a., acre(s)	Ad val., ad valorem, according to value
a.a., always afloat (shipping)	afft., affidavit
A. & C.P., anchors and chains proved	A. F. of L., American Federation of Labor
A. & F., August and February	a.g.b., a good brand
A. & O., April and October	agey., agency
A.A.A., American Automobile Association	A.G.F.A., Assistant General Freight Agent
a.a.r., against all risks	agst., against
A.B., Bachelor of Arts; able-bodied seaman	agt., agent
A.B.A., American Bankers Association	a.h., after hatch; ampere-hour(s)
A.B.C., Audit Bureau of Circulation	A.J.O.J., April, July, October, January
abt., about	alt., alternate
A/C, account current	a.m. (also A.M.), before noon
a c, account	A.M., Master of Arts
acc., acceptance; accepted	A.M.A., American Medical Association
acct., account	amp., ampere(s)
A/es Pay., accounts payable	amt., amount
A/es Rec., accounts receivable	a.n., arrival notice (shipping)
A/d, after date	A.N.F.M., August, November, February, May
A.D., in the year of our Lord	anon., anonymous
Adj.-Gen., Adjutant-General	ans., answer, answered
ad lib. or ad libit., at one's pleasure, freely, to the quantity or amount desired	a/o, account of
ad loc., to, or at, the place	A/or, and or
admr. or adms. or admsr., administrator	A.P. or AP or <i>A</i> , Associated Press



A/P, additional premium; authority to pay; accounts payable	A.S.S.R., Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
approx., approximately	Asst., assistant
A/R, all risks; against all risks; accounts receivable	A/T, American terms (grain trade)
Ar.M., Master of Architecture	at.no., atomic number
art., article	A. to O.C., attached to other correspondence
A/S, after sight; account sales; alongside (chartering)	ats., at suit of (law)
a.s., at sight	atty., attorney
assd., assigned	at. vol., atomic volume
assgt., assignment	at. wt., atomic weight
assmt., assessment	A/V, ad valorem (according to value)
assn., association	av., average
	Ave., Avenue

B

B.A., Bachelor of Arts	B.Ch.D., Bachelor of Dental Surgery
B.Acc., Bachelor of Accounting	B.C.L., Bachelor of Civil Law
B.Ag. or B.Agr., Bachelor of Agriculture	B.Com. or B.Comm., Bachelor of Commerce
B.Ag.Sc., Bachelor of Agricultural Science	B.Com.Sc., Bachelor of Commercial Science
bal., balance	B.C.S., Bachelor of Chemical Science
B.A.O., Bachelor of Obstetrics	B.D., Bachelor of Divinity
B.Ar. or B.Arch., Bachelor of Architecture	B/D., bank draft; bar draft (grain trade)
B.A.S. or B.A.Sc., Bachelor of Applied Science	bd., board, bond
b.b., bail bond; bill book; break bulk	bd.ft., board feet
B/B, bank balance	bdl., bundle(s)
B.B.A., Bachelor of Business Administration	B.D.S., Bachelor of Dental Surgery
bbl., barrel(s)	B.D.Sc., Bachelor of Dental Science
B/C., bill for collection	B.E., Bachelor of Education
B.C.E., Bachelor of Chemical Engineering; Bachelor of Civil Engineering	B/E, bill of exchange; bill of entry
B.Ch. or B.Chir., Bachelor of Surgery	B.E.E., Bachelor of Electrical Engineering
	B.Eng., Bachelor of Engineering
	B.Eng.A., Bachelor of Agricultural Engineering



- B.F., Bachelor of Finance; Bachelor of Forestry**  
**B/F, brought forward (bookkeeping)**  
**B.F.A., Bachelor of Fine Arts**  
**bg., bag(s)**  
**B/G, bonded goods**  
**B/H, bill of health**  
**b.h.p., brake horsepower**  
**B.Hy., Bachelor of Hygiene**  
**B.I.S., Bank for International Settlements**  
**B.J., Bachelor of Journalism**  
**bk., bank; book**  
**bkpt., bankrupt**  
**bkt., basket(s)**  
**bl., bale(s)**  
**B/L, bill of lading**  
**bldg., building**  
**bldr., builder**  
**B.L.E., Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers**  
**B.Lit(t), Bachelor of Literature, or Letters**  
**blk., block**  
**B.LL., Bachelor of Laws**  
**B.L.S., Bachelor of Library Science**  
**B.M., Bachelor of Medicine**  
**b.m., board measure (timber)**  
**B.M.E., Bachelor of Mining Engineering**  
**B.Mech.E., Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering**  
**B.Met., Bachelor of Metallurgy**  
**B.Mus., Bachelor of Music**  
**b.o., buyer's option; bad order (transport); branch office**  
**b/o, brought over**  
**B.P., Bachelor of Pharmacy**  
**B/P, bills payable; bill of parcels**  
**B.Pay., bills payable**  
**b.p.b., bank post bill**  
**B.P.E., Bachelor of Physical Education**  
**B.Phil., Bachelor of Philosophy**  
**B/R, bills receivable**  
**B.Rec., bills receivable**  
**brl., barrel(s)**  
**B/S, balance sheet; bill of sale**  
**B/s, bags; bales**  
**B.S., Bachelor of Science; boiler survey; balance sheet**  
**B.Sc., Bachelor of Science**  
**B.Sc.Agr., Bachelor of Science in Agriculture**  
**B.S.(Cer.E.), Bachelor of Science in Ceramic Engineering**  
**B.Sc.F. or B.Sc.For., Bachelor of Science in Forestry**  
**B.Sc.Tech., Bachelor of Technical Science**  
**B.S.Ed., Bachelor of Science in Education**  
**Bs/L, bills of lading**  
**B.S.M.E. or B.S.(Min.E.), Bachelor of Science in Mining Engineering**  
**B.S.P., Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy**  
**B/St, bill of sight**  
**B.T. or B.Th., Bachelor of Theology**  
**b.t., berth terms**  
**B.T.C., Bachelor of Textile Chemistry**  
**b.t.u., British thermal unit(s)**  
**bu., bushel(s)**  
**B.U.J., Bachelor of Both Laws (canon and civil)**  
**B/v, book value**  
**B.V.Sc., Bachelor of Veterinary Science**  
**B.W.G., Birmingham wire gauge**  
**bx., box**



C

- C., centigrade  
 c/-, case(s)  
 C.A., Chartered Accountant  
 C/A, capital account; credit account; current account; commercial agent; close annealed  
 ca., centare(s)  
 C a/c, current account  
 c.a.f., cost, assurance, and freight  
 c. & d., collection and delivery  
 c. & f., cost and freight  
 c. & i., cost and insurance  
 cart., cartage  
 C/B, cash book  
 C.B.D., cash before delivery  
 C.C., continuation clause (marine insurance)  
 cc., cubic centimeter  
 C.C.A., Circuit Court of Appeals  
 ccm., centimeter(s)  
 c/d, carried down (bookkeeping)  
 C/D, commercial dock; consular declaration; certificate of deposit  
 cf., compare  
 c/f, carried forward (bookkeeping)  
 c.f.i., cost, freight, and insurance  
 c.f.o., coast for orders  
 c.ft., cubic feet  
 cg., centigram(s)  
 C.G.A., cargo's proportion of general average  
 cge. pd., carriage paid  
 cgm., centigram(s)  
 Ch.B., Bachelor of Surgery  
 Ch.D., Doctor of Chemistry  
 Ch.E., Chemical Engineer  
 Chir.Doct., Doctor of Surgery  
 Ch.J., Chief Justice  
 Ch.M., Master of Surgery  
 C.I., consular invoice  
 C/I, certificate of insurance  
 C.I.D., Criminal Investigation Department  
 C.I.E., captain's imperfect entry (Customs)  
 c.i.f., cost, insurance, and freight  
 c.i.f. & c., cost, insurance, freight, and commission  
 c.i.f. & e., cost, insurance, freight, and exchange  
 c.i.f. & i., cost, insurance, freight, and interest  
 c.i.f.c. & i., cost, insurance, freight, commission, and interest  
 c.i.f.i. & e., cost, insurance, freight, interest, and exchange  
 c.i.f.L.t., cost, insurance, and freight, London terms  
 C.I.O., Committee on Industrial Organization  
 ck., cask(s); check  
 C/L, cash letter  
 cl., centiliter(s)  
 c.l., carload  
 c/l, craft loss  
 C.L.D., Doctor of Civil Law  
 cld., cleared  
 C.M., Master in Surgery  
 cm., centimeter(s)  
 C/N, credit note; consignment note; circular note  
 C/O, cash order; certificate of origin; case oil  
 Co., company; county  
 c/o, in care of; carried over (bookkeeping)  
 c.o.d. or C.O.D., cash on delivery  
 com., commission



con., consolidated	C/T, cable transfer; California terms (grain trade)
cont., contract; continued; continuing	ct., cent(s)
consgt., consignment	ctge., cartage
conv., convertible	c.t.l., constructive total loss (marine insurance)
corp., corporation; corporal	c.t.l.o., constructive total loss only (marine insurance)
cp., coupon; compare	c. to s., carting to shipside
c.p., candlepower; chemically pure	cu., cubic
C/P, charter party; custom of port (grain trade)	cu. cm., cubic centimeter(s)
C.P.A., Certified Public Accountant	cu. in., cubic inch(es)
C.P.D., charterers pay dues	cu. mi., cubic mile(s)
C.R., class rate; current rate; company's risk; carrier's risk	cum., cumulative
cr., credit; creditor	cur. or curt., current
C/S, colliery screened (coal trade)	c.v., chief value
c/s, cases	C.W., commercial weight
CSC, Civil Service Commission	c.w.o., cash with order
	cwt., hundredweight(s)

## D

d., pence	D.C.T., Doctor of Christian Theology
D/A, deposit account; documents against acceptance; discharge afloat	D.D., Doctor of Divinity
d a, days after acceptance	D/D, demand draft; delivered at docks; delivered at destination; dock dues
D.Agr., Doctor of Agriculture	D/d, days after date
dal., decaliter(s)	dd., delivered
D. & J., December and June	dd/s, delivered sound (grain trade)
d. & w.t.f., daily and weekly until forbidden	D.D.S., Doctor of Dental Surgery
D.Arch., Doctor of Architecture	D.D.Sc., Doctor of Dental Science
D.B. or D/B, day book; deals and battens (timber trade)	D.E., Doctor of Entomology
d.b.h., diameter at breast height	decim., decimeter(s)
dbk., drawback	deld. or deldr., delivered
D/C, deviation clause	D.Eng., Doctor of Engineering
d.c., direct current	depr., depreciation
D.C.L., Doctor of Civil Law	d.f., dead freight
D.Cn.L., Doctor of Canon Law	dept., department
	dg., decigram(s)



D.Hy., Doctor of Hygiene  
 dis. *or* disc., discount  
 dist., district  
 div., dividend; division  
 D.J., Doctor of Law  
 D.J.S., Doctor of Judicial Science  
 dkg., dekagram(s)  
 dkl., dekaliter(s)  
 D L, demand loan  
 dkm., dekameter(s)  
 dks., decastere(s)  
 dl., deciliter(s)  
 D.Lit(t)., Doctor of Literature, *or* Letters  
 D.L.O., Dead Letter Office  
 d.l.o., dispatch leading only  
 D.L.S., Doctor of Library Science  
 D.M.D., Doctor of Dental Medicine  
 D.Met., Doctor of Metallurgy  
 D.M.J.S., December, March, June, September  
 D.M.S., Doctor of Medical Science  
 D.Mus., Doctor of Music  
 D/N, debit note  
 do., ditto  
 D.Oec., Doctor of Economics  
 D.O.S., Doctor of Optical Science

D/P, documents against payment  
 d.p., direct port  
 D.P.H., Doctor of Public Health  
 D.Phil., Doctor of Philosophy  
 D/R, deposit receipt  
 dr., debit; debtor; drawer  
 Dr., doctor  
 dr. ap., apothecaries' dram  
 dr. av., dram(s) avoirdupois  
 D/s, days after sight  
 ds., decistere(s)  
 D.Sc., Doctor of Science  
 D.S.S., Doctor of Holy Scripture  
 D.S.T., Doctor of Sacred Theology  
 D.T. *or* D.Th., Doctor of Theology  
 D.T.M., Doctor of Tropical Medicine  
 D.V.M., Doctor of Veterinary Medicine  
 D.V.M.S., Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery  
 D/W, dock warrant  
 d.w., dead weight  
 d.w.c., dead weight capacity  
 dwt., pennyweight(s)  
 D/y, delivery  
 D.Z., Doctor of Zoology  
 dz. *or* doz., dozen

E

E., east  
 ea., each  
 e. & o.e., errors and omissions excepted  
 e.a.o.n., except as otherwise noted  
 ed., editor; edition  
 Ed.B., Bachelor of Education  
 Ed.D., Doctor of Education  
 Ed.M., Master of Education

e.e., errors excepted  
 e.g., for example  
 eng., engineer; engineering  
 Eng.D., Doctor of Engineering  
 engr., engraver; engraving  
 e.o., ex officio  
 e.o.h.p., except as otherwise herein provided  
 e.o.m., end of the month (payments)



est., estimated; estate  
 estab., established  
 et al., and others  
 etc., et cetera (and so forth)  
 et seq., and the following  
 et seqq., and those following  
 Ex.B.L., exchange bill of lading  
 ex/cp. or x/cp, ex coupon

exch., exchange  
 ex d. or ex div., ex dividend  
 exd., examined  
 exec., executive  
 ex int., ex interest  
 ex n., ex new  
 ex r., ex rights  
 ex ship, delivered out of ship

## F

F., Fahrenheit  
 f.a., free alongside  
 f.a.a., free of all average (marine insurance)  
 fac., facsimile  
 f.a.c., fast as can  
 F. & A., February and August  
 f. & d., freight and demurrage  
 f.a.q., fair average quality; free at quay  
 f.a.s., free alongside ship; firsts and seconds (lumber)  
 f.a.q.s., fair average quality of season  
 f.b., freight bill  
 f.b.m., free board measure  
 f.d., free discharge; free delivery; free dispatch; free docks  
 ff., following  
 f.f.a., free from alongside; free foreign agency  
 F.G.A., foreign general average (marine insurance)  
 f.h., fore hatch  
 f.i.a., full interest admitted  
 f.i.b., free into bunkers  
 fin. sec., financial secretary  
 f.i.o., free in and out  
 f.i.t., free of income tax; free in truck  
 f.i.w., free in wagon

F.L.N., following landing numbers  
 fl.oz., fluid ounce(s)  
 fm., fathom(s)  
 F.M.A.N., February, May, August, November  
 F.O., firm offer; free overside  
 f.o., for orders; firm offer, full out terms (grain trade)  
 f.o.b. or F.O.B., free on board  
 f.o.c., free of charge; free on car  
 f.o.d., free of damage  
 fol., following  
 f.o.q., free on quay  
 f.o.r., free on rail  
 f.o.r.t., free out rye terms (grain trade)  
 f.o.s., free on steamer  
 f.o.t., free on truck  
 f.o.w., free on wagon  
 F.P., floating (open) policy  
 F.P.A., free of particular average (marine ins.)  
 F.P.A.A.C., free of particular average American Conditions (marine ins.)  
 F.P.A.E.C., free of particular average English Conditions (marine ins.)  
 f.p.m., feet per minute



f.p.s., feet per second  
 F/R, freight release  
 fr., franc(s)  
 f.r.o.f., fire risk on freight  
 frt. or fgt., freight

ft., foot; feet; fort  
 f.t., full terms  
 F.T.W., free trade wharf  
 fwd., forward  
 f.w.d., fresh water damage

## G

G/A, general average (marine ins.)  
 G/A con., general average contribution (marine ins.)  
 G/A dep., general average deposit (marine ins.)  
 gal. or gall., gallon(s)  
 G.A.R., Grand Army of the Republic  
 Gen., General  
 G.F.A., General Freight Agent  
 g.f.a., good fair average  
 g.gr., great gross  
 gi., gill(s)  
 gm., gram(s)

Gov., Governor  
 govt., government  
 G.P.A., General Passenger Agent  
 g.p.m., gallons per minute  
 gr., gram(s); gross  
 gro., gross  
 gr. wt., gross weight  
 G.T.C., good till canceled, or countermanded  
 gtd., guaranteed  
 G.T.M., good this month  
 G.T.W., good this week, becomes void on Saturday  
 guar., guaranteed

## H

ha., hectare(s)  
 H.C., held covered (insurance)  
 h.c.l., high cost of living  
 hdkf., handkerchief  
 H.F.M., hold for money  
 hg., hectogram(s)  
 hhd., hogshead(s)  
 hl., hectoliter(s)

hm., hectometer(s)  
 Hon., honorable  
 hp. or H.P., horsepower  
 H.P.N., horsepower nominal  
 hr., hour  
 H.W., high water  
 H.W.M., high-water mark  
 H.W.O.S.T., high-water ordinary spring tide

## I

I.B., invoice book; in bond  
 I.B.A., Investment Bankers Association  
 I.B.I., invoice book, inwards  
 ibid., in the same place

I.B.O., invoice book, outwards  
 I.C. & C., invoice cost and charges  
 I.C.C., Interstate Commerce Commission  
 id., the same



i.e., that is ✓

I.F.T.U., International Federation  
of Trade Unions

I.H.P., indicated horsepower

I.L.O., International Labor Organ-  
ization

I.L.P., Independent Labour Party  
(British)

imp. gal., imperial gallon(s)

in., inch(es)

inc., incorporated; increase

incl., inclosure

ins., insurance; inspector

inst., installment; instant

int., interest

I.O.U., "I owe you"

I.P.A., including particular average

i.v., invoice value

I.W.W., Industrial Workers of the  
World

## J

J.A., joint account

J.A.J.O., January, April, July, Oc-  
tober

J. & D., June and December

J. & J., January and July

j. & w.o., jettison and washing over-  
board

J.B., Bachelor of Laws

J.C.B., Bachelor of Canon Law;  
Bachelor of Civil Law

J.C.D., Doctor of Civil Law

J.D., Doctor of Laws

J.O.J.A., July, October, January,  
April

J.P., Justice of the Peace

J.S.D., Doctor of Juristic Science

J.S.D.M., June, September, Decem-  
ber, March

J.U.D., Doctor of Both Laws (mean-  
ing Canon and Civil)

## K

k., karat; knot

kc., kilocycle(s)

K.D., knocked down

K.D.C.L., knocked down, in car-  
loads

K.D.L.C.L., knocked down, in less  
than carloads

kg. or kgm., kilogram(s)

kg., keg(s)

kilo., kilometer(s)

K.K.K., Ku Klux Klan

kl., kiloliter(s)

km., kilometer(s)

kn., kroner

kv., kilovolts

kw., kilowatt(s)

kw.-hr., kilowatt-hour(s)

## L

l., liter(s)

L/A, letter of authority; landing ac-  
count; Lloyd's agent

L.A.M., Master of Liberal Arts

lat., latitude

L.B., Bachelor of Letters

lb., pound(s)

lb. ap., apothecaries' pound(s)

lc., lower case

L/C, letter of credit



l.c.l., less than carload lot	L.M.S.C., let me see correspondence
ldg., loading	loc. cit., in the place cited
ldg. & dely., landing and delivery	log , logarithm
lds., loads	long., longitude
lg. tn., long ton(s)	lr., lire
L.I.P., life insurance policy	L.R.M.C., Lloyd's refrigerating machinery certificate
Lit(t).B., Bachelor of Literature, <i>or</i> Letters	L.S., place of the seal
Lit(t).D., Doctor of Literature, <i>or</i> Letters	lt., long ton
lkg. & bkg., leakage and breakage	Lt. <i>or</i> Lieut., lieutenant
LL.B., Bachelor of Laws	Lt. Gov., Lieutenant Governor
Ll. & Co.'s, Lloyd's and Companies	Ltd., limited
LL.D., Doctor of Laws	ltge., lighterage
LL.M., Master of Laws	Lt.V., light vessel
L.M.C., Lloyd's machinery certificate	L.W., low water
l.m.c., low middling clause (cotton trade)	L.W.M., low-water mark
	££, pound Egyptian
	£T, pound Turkish

M

m., meter(s)	max.cap., maximum capacity
M., thousand	M.B., Bachelor of Medicine
M.A., Master of Arts	M.B.A., Master in, <i>or</i> of, Business Administration
m/a, my account	M.B.C.M., Bachelor of Medicine and Master of Surgery
Ma.E., Master of Engineering	M.B.M., thousands (of feet) board measure
mag., magazine	M.B.Sc., Master of Business Science
M.Agr., Master of Agriculture	M.C., Master of Surgery
M.Agr.Sc., Master of Agricultural Science	M/C, marginal credit; metaling clause (marine ins.)
M.A.I., Master of Engineering	m.c., marked capacity (freight cars)
Maj. Gen., Major General	M.C.D., Doctor of Comparative Medicine
M. & N., May and November	M.C.E., Master of Civil Engineering
M.A.N.F., May, August, November, February	M.Ch., Master of Surgery
M. & S., March and September	M.C.L., Master of Civil Law
M.A.O., Master of Obstetric Art	M.Com(m)., Master of Commerce
M.Arch., Master of Architecture	
M.A.S., Master of Applied Science	
max., maximum	



<b>M.C.S.,</b> Master of Commercial Science	m.m., necessary changes being made
<b>M.D.,</b> Doctor of Medicine	<b>Mme.,</b> Madame
<b>M/D,</b> memorandum of deposit	<b>M.M.E.,</b> Master of Mining Engineering
m/d, months after date	<b>M.Mech.E.,</b> Master of Mechanical Engineering
<b>M.D.S.,</b> Master of Dental Surgery	<b>Mmes.,</b> Mesdames
<b>M.D.Sc.,</b> Master of Dental Science	<b>M/O or M.O.,</b> money order
mdse., merchandise	mo., month(s)
meas., measure; measuring	<b>M.O.H.,</b> Medical Officer of Health
<b>M.E.C.,</b> Master of Engineering Chemistry	<b>M.P.,</b> member of Parliament
<b>Mech.E.,</b> Mechanical Engineer	<b>M.P.E.,</b> Master of Physical Education
<b>M.Ed.,</b> Master of Education	<b>M.P.II.,</b> Master of Public Health
memo., memorandum	m.p.h., miles per hour
<b>M.Eng.,</b> Master of Engineering	<b>M.P.L.,</b> Master of Patent Law
m.e.p., mean effective pressure	<b>Mr.,</b> Mister
<b>Messrs.,</b> Messieurs	<b>M.R.E.,</b> Master of Religious Education
<b>M.F.A.,</b> Master of Fine Arts	<b>Mrs.,</b> Mistress
mfg., manufacturing	<b>MS.,</b> manuscript
mfr., manufacturer	<b>M.S.,</b> motor ship
mg. or mgm., milligram(s)	<b>M/s,</b> months after sight
mgr., manager	<b>M.S.Agr.,</b> Master of Scientific Agriculture
<b>M.H.,</b> main hatch	<b>M.Sc.,</b> Master of Science
<b>M.Hy.,</b> Master of Hygiene	<b>M.S.(Cer.E.),</b> Master of Science in Ceramic Engineering
mi., mile(s)	<b>M.Sc.Tech.,</b> Master of Technical Science
min., minimum	<b>M.S.F.,</b> Master of Science in Forestry
min. B L, minimum bill of lading	<b>M.S. in C.E.,</b> Master of Science in Civil Engineering
<b>M.I.P.,</b> marine insurance policy	<b>M.S. in Ch.E.,</b> Master of Science in Chemical Engineering
m.i.t., milled in transit	<b>M.S. in E.E.,</b> Master of Science in Electrical Engineering
misc., miscellaneous	<b>M.S. in M.E.,</b> Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering
<b>M.J.S.D.,</b> March, June, September, December	mst., measurement
mkt., market	
ml., milliliter(s)	
<b>M.Lit(t).,</b> Master of Letters	
<b>Mlle.,</b> Mademoiselle	
<b>Mlles.,</b> Mademoiselles	
<b>M.L.S.,</b> Master of Library Science	
mm., millimeter(s)	



Mt., mount  
M.T., metric ton  
mtg., mortgage  
M.Th., Master of Theology

M.V.Sc., Master of Veterinary Science  
M.V., motor vessel  
M/V, market value

N

N., north  
N/A, no advice (banking)  
n/a, no account (banking)  
n.a.a., not always afloat (shipping)  
N. & M., November and May  
Nat. or Natl., National  
N.B., note well  
N/B, National Bank  
N/C, new charter; new crop  
n.c.u.p., no commission until paid  
N.C.V., no commercial value  
N/E, no effects (banking)  
n.e., not exceeding  
N.E.P., New Economic Policy (U.S.S.R.)  
n.e.s., not elsewhere specified  
n/f, no funds (banking)  
N.F.M.A., November, February, May, August  
n.g., no good (colloquial)  
N.H.P., nominal horsepower

n/m, no mark  
No., number  
N/O, no orders (banking)  
N.O.E., not otherwise enumerated  
N.O.H.P., not otherwise herein provided  
nol. pros., unwilling to prosecute  
nom. std., nominal standard  
N.O.S., not otherwise specified  
Nos., numbers  
N.P., no protest (banking)  
n/p, net proceeds  
N.P.L., non-personal liability  
n.r., no risk; net register  
n.r.a.d., no risk after discharge  
N/S or N.S.F., not sufficient funds (banking)  
n.s.p.f., not specially provided for  
n.t., net ton; new terms (grain trade)  
nt. wt., net weight

O

o/a, on account of  
O. & A., October and April  
o. & r., ocean and rail  
obs., obsolete  
o/c, open charter; old charter; old crop; open cover; overcharge  
o/d, on demand  
o.e., omissions excepted  
O.J.A.J., October, January, April, July

O.K., approved  
O/o, order of  
O.P., open, or floating policy  
op. cit., in the work cited  
Opt.D., Doctor of Optometry  
o.r., owner's risk (transp.)  
o.r.b., owner's risk of breakage (transp.)  
o.r.c., owner's risk of chafing (transp.)



o.r.d., owner's risk of damage (transp.)	o.r.s., owner's risk of shifting (transp.)
o.r.det., owner's risk of deterioration (transp.)	o.r.w., owner's risk of water (transp.)
o.r.f., owner's risk of fire, or freezing (transp.)	O/S, on sample; out of stock'
o.r.l., owner's risk of leakage (transp.)	o.s. & d., over, short, and damaged (transp.)
	o/t, old terms (grain trade)
	oz., ounce(s)

## P

p., page	p.l., partial loss
P/A, Purchasing Agent; power of attorney; private account; particular average	plf. or plff., plaintiff
p. & i., protection and indemnity	P/M, Put of More (stock exchange)
P. & L., profit and loss	pm., premium
pat., patent; patented	P.M., postmaster; afternoon (also p.m.)
P Av., particular average	P/N, promissory note
payt., payment	pop., population
P.B., permanent bunkers	P.O.D., pay on delivery
P C, petty cash; per cent; price current	P.O.R., payable on receipt
P.D., port dues	pp., pages
pd., paid; passed	p.p., picked ports; per procuracionem (on behalf of)
Pe.B., Bachelor of Pediatrics	ppd., prepaid
pf. or pfg., pfennig	P/P, parcel post
pdf., preferred	p.p.i., policy proof of interest (marine ins.)
Phar.B., Bachelor of Pharmacy	ppt., prompt loading
Phar.D., Doctor of Pharmacy	pr., pair(s)
Phar.M., Master of Pharmacy	Pres., president
Ph.B., Bachelor of Pharmacy; Bachelor of Philosophy; Bachelor of Physical Education	pro tem., for the time being
Ph.C., Pharmaceutical Chemist	P/S, public sale
Ph.D., Doctor of Philosophy	P.S., postscript
Ph.G., Graduate in Pharmacy	pt., pint (s)
pi., piaster(s)	p.t., private terms (grain trade)
pk., peck(s)	p.w., packed weight (transp.)
pkg., package	pwt., pennyweight
pkt., packet	P.X., please exchange; Post Exchange (Army)



Q

q.d.q., quantity discount agreement	qn., quotation
qlty., quality	qt., quart(s)

R

R/A, refer to acceptor	R.I.L.U., Red International of Labor Unions
r. & c., rail and canal (transp.)	r.l. & r., rail, lake, and rail (transp.)
r. & l., rail and lake (transp.)	rm., ream (paper)
r. & o., rail and ocean (transp.)	R.O.G., receipt of goods
r. & w., rail and water (transp.)	r.o.m., run of mine (coal)
R/C, reconsigned	rotn.no., rotation number
r.c. & l., rail, canal, and lake (transp.)	R.P., return premiums
rcd., received	R/p, return of post for orders
R/D, refer to drawer	R.P.D., Doctor of Political Science
R. D., rural delivery (also R.F.D.)	r.p.h., revolutions per hour
r.d., running days	r.p.m., revolutions per minute
r.d.c., running down clause (marine ins.)	r.p.s., revolutions per second
rcd., received	R.R. or RR, railroad
ref., reference; referred	Rs, rupees
reg., register; registered	R.S., Revised Statutes
rep., representing; representative	R.S.V.P., reply, if you please
rfg., refunding	rt., right
R.I., re-insurance	R.V.S.V.P., please reply at once
	Ry., railway

S

S., south	S.C., salvage charges
s., shillings	s.c., small capitals
s/a, subject to approval; safe arrival	s.c. & s., strapped, corded, and sealed (transp.)
s. & c., shipper and carrier	Sc.B., Bachelor of Science
S. & F.A., shipping and forwarding agent	Sc.D., Doctor of Science
S. & M., September and March	S.C.D., Doctor of Commercial Science
s.a.n.r., subject to approval no risk (until insurance is confirmed)	Sc.M., Master of Science
S.B., short bill	S/D, sea-damaged (grain trade); sight draft
S/B, statement of billing (transp.); savings bank	S.D.B.L., sight draft, bill of lading attached



S.D.M.J., September, December, March, June	sq. in., square inch(es)
S.E.C., Supreme Economic Council (U.S.S.R.)	sq. mi., square mile(s)
sec., secretary	sq. rd., square rod(s)
sect., section	sq. yd., square yard(s)
S.F., sinking fund	Sr., senior
S.F.S.R., Socialist Federation of Soviet Republics	S.S., steamship; screw steamer
Sgt., Sergeant	ss., namely; to wit
sh., share	S.S.B., Bachelor of Sacred Scripture
s.h.p., shaft horsepower	S.S.D., Doctor of Sacred Scripture
shpt., shipment	St., saint; street
sh.tn., short ton	s.t., short ton
s.i.t., stopping in transit (transp.)	sta., station
S.J.D., Doctor of Juridical Science	S.T.B., Bachelor of Sacred Theology
sk., sack(s)	S.T.D., Doctor of Sacred Theology
s.l., salvage loss	std., standard
S/N, shipping note	stet, disregard correction
S/O, seller's option; shipping order; ship's option	stg., sterling
Soc., society	stk., stock
S.O.L., shipowner's liability	str., steamer; strait
SOS, call for help	S.T.M., Master of Sacred Theology
S.P., supra protest	S. to S., station to station
s.p.a., subject to partial average (marine ins.)	S.U.C.L., set up in carloads (transp.)
s.p.d., steamer pays dues	S.U.L.C.L., set up in less than car- loads (transp.)
sp.gr., specific gravity	supt., superintendent
sq. ch., square chain(s)	s.v., sailing vessel
sq. ft., square feet	S.W., shipper's weight
	S.W.G., Standard Wire Gauge
	syn., synonym
	synd., syndicate

## T

t., ton	T/D, time deposit
T.A., Traffic Agent	T.E., trade expense
T. & G., tongued and grooved (tim- ber trade)	tf. or t.f., till forbidden
T/B or t.b., trial balance	T.G.B., tongued, grooved, and beaded
T/C, trust company; until counter- manded	Th.B., Bachelor of Theology
	Th.D., Doctor of Theology



Th.M., Master of Theology  
T/L, time loan  
t.l.o., total loss only (marine ins.)  
TNT, trinitrotoluene  
T/O, transfer order  
T.R., tons registered (shipping)

tr., transpose  
Treas., treasurer, treasury  
T.T., telegraphic transfer  
twp., township  
ty. *or* ter., territory

U

U/A, underwriting account (marine ins.)  
u. c., upper case  
U.J.D., Doctor of Either Law (Canon or Civil)  
ult., ultimo (of the last month)  
u.p., under proof

U.S.A., United States of America; United States Army  
U.S.M., United States Mail  
U.S.N., United States Navy  
U.S.S.R., Union of Soviet Socialist Republics  
U/w, underwriter

V

V.C., valuation clause  
vide, see  
viz., namely; to wit  
V.M.D., Doctor of Veterinary Medicine

vol., volume  
v.o.p., value as in original policy  
V.P., vice president  
vs., versus

W

W., west  
W.A., with average (marine ins.)  
w. & r., water and rail (transp.)  
W.B., water ballast; warehouse book; way bill  
w.b.s., without benefit of salvage  
w/d, warranted  
w.f., wrong font  
w.g., weight guaranteed  
whf., wharf  
w.i., when issued (stock exchange)  
W.I.I.U., Workers' International Industrial Union

wk., week  
W/M, weight and/or measurement  
W.O.L., wharfowner's liability  
w.p., without prejudice; weather permitting  
W.P.A., with particular average (marine ins.)  
w.p.p., waterproof paper package  
W.R., warehouse receipt  
w.r.o., war risk only  
wt., weight  
W/W, warehouse warrant

X

x-c. *or* x-cp., ex-coupon  
x-d. *or* x-div., ex-dividend  
x-i. *or* x-int., ex-interest

x-n., ex-new  
x-rts., ex-rights



## Y

Y.M.C.A., Young Men's Christian Association

Y.W.C.A., Young Women's Christian Association

Y.M.H.A., Young Men's Hebrew Association

Y.W.H.A., Young Women's Hebrew Association

yr., year

*5. Capitalization*

*Not wholly governed by rules.* Like many of the other aspects of letter-writing, capitalization is determined by judgment as well as rules. Certain of the latter are so firmly established by custom that you must accept and follow them, but in many other respects the question of whether or not to capitalize depends on personal preference, or the style set up by executive direction. For example, those who write for publishing firms, or in newspaper offices, are commonly told when to use capitals; this is also true of the larger companies in which correspondence methods have been standardized. These individuals, however, represent only a minority of the business and professional letter-writers; and the majority are left to their own inclinations as to what words deserve emphasis.

Undoubtedly, many writers and their secretaries capitalize more than they should, although some go to the opposite extreme by disregarding established rules which should never be broken. In general, the present trend is toward capitalization only when the failure to do so would be contrary to approved practice, and a faux pas subject to criticism.

Certainly, the unnecessary capitalization of a word will not draw as much fire as the failure to capitalize one in defiance of established custom. In the one case, the writer may only be accused of giving emphasis where it was not needed; in the other, he may be marked as an ignorant person. Not to capitalize the name of a street, town, or state would be a far more lamentable mistake than merely to write *salesman* with a capital *S* when ordinarily it is not done that way.

Unnecessary capital: That man is a good Salesman.

Downright ignorance: I saw him on high street.

This illustration points the way to a very simple rule which reverses the advice commonly given for other human activities. With respect to capitalization, "When in doubt, *do*," not "don't," for surely it is a lot safer to put in than leave out. On the other hand, when not confused, and fully aware that you can be correct either way, then in our opinion the best policy is *not* to use the capital.



To be sure, this policy will not find favor with those who love their capitals as you may love your morning dish of Wheaties. In one large company where very fine letters are written—and keeping them that way is almost a religion—there is still a fondness for capitalizing the word *representative*. Hence, they say in their letters, “As you requested, our Representative called yesterday,” or “Our Representative noticed the increase, and checked again to make sure his reading was correct.” The executives responsible for letters in this company know that the *R* is not considered necessary, but in their judgment it is better than *r*, so they keep on using it. And that is what we mean by saying that in capitalization, judgment often takes the driver’s seat!

*Guideposts to general practice.* Consider the following rules, therefore, as guideposts to general practice. Some of them are accepted without question by all informed writers; others may be interpreted in the light of your own opinion.

(1) Capitalize the first word in any sentence, the first word in each line of a poem, and the first word in a direct quotation. You learned those things in grade school, and any one who writes at all would never violate at least the first and second of the three instructions. However, some confusion does seem to exist regarding the third. For example, you might make the mistake of using a small *c* in the following direct quotation.

The speaker said: “Civilization has never faced a danger so terrible as the invention of the atomic bomb.”

In this sentence you have a direct quotation of the speaker’s words, and the first one must be capitalized. In the following sentence, however, the quotation is merely a part of the structure, and the first word is not capitalized.

Frankly, your haste to collect this bill under the circumstances is only another evidence of “man’s inhumanity to man,” and I urge with all my heart that you do not press your claim immediately.

(2) Proper nouns should be capitalized; common nouns should not be capitalized. This is a simple rule to follow, provided the distinction between “proper” and “common” is clear in your mind. A proper noun is one which specifically identifies a thing or a person; a common noun identifies one or more units of a common group of things or persons. *Monday*, a specific day of the week, is a proper noun; *week*, a word which identifies only a group of days, is a common noun. “Jones, the carpenter,” identifies a specific person



whose name is *Jones* (proper noun), and his trade, *carpenter* (common noun), which is also the trade of many other persons. When you write, "His home is in Chicago," you capitalize *Chicago*, because that is the name of a specific city, but you do not capitalize *home* because it merely identifies one of a common group of homes.

Any person of the slightest education knows that the names of people and places must be capitalized, but knowing whether other types of nouns are proper or common is sometimes a little more confusing. Thus, *street* is a common noun if used without special identity, but a proper noun if used to help identify one street as apart from others.

Common: He fell in the *street* and broke his hip.

Proper: He fell on *High Street* and broke his hip.

In the same way, many other nouns take the proper form, and must be capitalized, when they help to designate specific identity. Examples:

Bodies of water: Mississippi River; Atlantic Ocean; Lake Oliver.

Transportation: Pennsylvania Railroad; Panama Limited; Union Station; Car Nine; Greyhound Bus Line; American Airways.

Hotels: Palmer House; Blue Room; Presidential Suite; Hotel Daniel Boone; Room 707; Smith's Tourist Home; Men's Dormitory.

Public places: The Municipal Building; Columbus Art Museum; Forest Park Zoo; Arlington Public Library; Washington Park; Memorial Hall.

Worship and education: First Methodist Church; University of Illinois; Lincoln Hall; Ohio State Stadium; West High School; Students' Union Building.

Locations: East Broad Street; the North End; Fifth Avenue; the Loop; Roosevelt Circle.

Companies: Peoples' Gas Company; General Motors Corporation; Purina Mills; South Side Motor Service.

Clubs and associations: University Club; Independent Players; National Association of Real Estate Boards; Kansas City Sales Executives Club; Omaha Advertising Club; Charity Newsies; Friendly Sons of St. Patrick.

Organizations: the Republican Party; Humane Society; American Legion; Veterans of Foreign Wars; Central Graduates Association; Daughters of American Revolution; Theta Delta Chi Foundation.



Publications: Readers' Digest; Kansas City Star; Illini Alumni News; Collier's Weekly; Headlines; Saturday Evening Post.

Books and articles: Handbook of Business Letters; Tale of Two Cities; As You Like It; Pros and Cons of the Atomic Bomb; How to Sell a Home; "Things the Best Salesmen Know"; "Modern Trends in Advertising."

Departments: Research Department; Department of Agriculture; Credit and Collection Department.

Proper adjectives must also be capitalized, such as: the *American* policy; *Oriental* rugs; *Venetian* blinds; an *English* city.

(3) Titles are sometimes capitalized, sometimes not, depending on their nature and how they are used. Be sure that you understand these distinctions or they may cause you trouble. For example, an official title is capitalized if it precedes the name of the titled individual, but not if it follows that name.

Preceding: Several hundred gathered to hear *President John Doe's* address.

Following: Among those in the audience was John Doe, *president*.

An exception to this rule, of course, is present in the inside address of a business letter. There the title is capitalized, even though it follows the name of the individual.

Oscar D. Mardis, President,  
Omaha Advertising Club,  
Omaha, Nebraska.

Titles of courtesy are always capitalized. Examples: *Baron*; *Countess*; *His Majesty*; *Her Royal Highness*; *Governor John W. Bricker*; *Judge Weaver*.

When used in direct address, or with the individual's name, family titles are capitalized; otherwise, they are not.

*Uncle Tobey* (with name) is proud of his nephews.

What does your *uncle* (without name) think of his nephews?

He insists that you see him, *Father*. (Direct address)

He tried to see *father*.

Political titles are usually capitalized, and always when referring to a specific individual. Examples: *Senator John D. Doe*; *Harvey Bates*, *Mayor* of Utopia; the *King* of Ethiopia. However, when a



specific individual is not indicated, these titles are not capitalized by the majority of writers.

We have a *senator* registered at our hotel.

I wouldn't be *mayor* for love nor money.

After that swim I feel like a *king*.

(4) Capitalize all references to the Deity. Examples: *God*; *Sacred Scriptures*; *Holy Ghost*; *Star of Bethlehem*; *His Only Son*; *Father*; *His Love*. This does not apply, however, when the word is used for any other than the One God, as in the commonly heard expression: "It's in the laps of the *gods* now," or "The *gods* of the ancient Greeks were a rowdy crew at times."

Among certain religious faiths, capitalization is also used in references to Mary, Mother of Jesus. Thus, they write of *Her*, and of the *Holy Mother*, with the same reverence that they write of *Him*, their God. The business letter writer must respect religious beliefs and customs, and try hard not to inadvertently offend a reader by not capitalizing when it is expected. It would be very thoughtless, for example, to refer to the *holy mother* in writing to an individual who would be shocked by what he considered an act of disrespect.

(5) Capitalize the names of educational subjects only if the reference is specifically to them.

In college, I liked best my courses in *public speaking* and *dramatics*.

In college, *Public Speaking 1*, and *Shakespeare 3* were the two courses I liked best.

I have decided to major in *psychology*, because father says it will be very valuable in selling.

If you want a snap course, register in *Psychology 6*.

(6) Capitalize special names given to products in business, but not words used to identify them in a common way. Example: Packard *automobiles* cling to the road; the model I am going to buy is called the *Clipper*.

(7) Do not capitalize the seasons of the year; write *winter*, not *Winter*.

(8) Words indicating points of the compass or their derivatives should not be capitalized unless the reference is to geographic sections of the country. Designations of mere direction are not capitalized.



The lake is about five miles *south* of La Grange.

Usually, we drive *east* on our vacation, but this summer we are going *south* to New Orleans, and then on to the *western* coast.

It is always a hard fight when *North* plays *East*, but for some reason *South* never has a good team.

The *Western Division* of this railroad ends in Denver.

The *Middle-West* voters are strongly against the President, but very likely the *South* will again vote solidly for him.

(9) Do not capitalize such words as government, national, federal, state, and constitution, unless referring to the state in which you live, or to the United States.

During the Second World War, we advanced toward a socialistic form of *government*.

With the help of OPA, and other agencies created as war emergencies, the *Government* has gained powers not delegated in the *Constitution*.

I am going to appoint the following committee to frame a *constitution* for our new club.

Sentiment toward this law differs widely in the various *states*, but in the *State* of Ohio where I live, the proportion is at least 3 to 1 for it.

We hope this movement does not become *national* in scope.

The *National Government* at times seems handicapped by lack of a strong foreign policy.

(10) Capitalize any noun followed by a Roman numeral. Examples: *Division II*, *Volume V*, *Chapter IV*.

(11) Names of holidays, special weeks, and the like, are always capitalized. Examples: Mother's Day; Armistice Day; March of Dimes; Victory Day; Memorial Day; Meatless Day; Apple Week.

(12) When part of a name of a company, organization, or institution is used, some writers capitalize it; others do not.

How about eating with us tonight at the *Club*?

The *Society* is greater than any individual in it.

I shouldn't be writing this letter on *Company* time.

I'm betting my all that *State* wins.

(13) With the passing of time, certain words lose their specific meaning, or they become less pointed. Hence, during the transition



some writers continue to capitalize; others do not. Examples: *diesel* engine; *ethyl* gas; *marathon* race; *mimeograph*; *roman* type.

As stated in the beginning, some of the rules for capitalization are obligatory; others are more or less left to the will of the individual or those to whom he reports. The important thing—you might call it Rule 14—is to adopt a style which conforms with the standards generally accepted as right, follow your own inclination where any choice is permitted, and then *stick to it*. Good writers do not use one form of capitalization today, and another tomorrow. They are *consistent*.

## 6. *Punctuation*

*Why we have punctuation marks.* There is no mystery about the use of punctuation marks. They serve the simple purpose of helping to transfer thoughts in written form so that the reader will have no difficulty in understanding them. It is therefore a mistake to omit any mark which might aid in accomplishing that purpose, or to use one which contributes nothing to it. Neither can it be said correctly that the modern trend is toward the elimination of punctuation in a business letter. When you hear such a statement, it simply means that modern writers are careful not to use punctuation marks which are not necessary. Each of these marks has certain well-defined functions, and *must be used* when the need exists. What these functions are must be clearly understood if the thought is to be transferred without confusion, and in the most effective manner.

For example, it would be extremely difficult for you to read and easily grasp the thoughts on this page if periods, commas, and the other necessary marks were omitted. Each of the marks helps to separate words and groups of words so that you may better understand their relationship to each other. They are little traffic signals which point the way for your mind to go. They permit you to pause and mentally review what has been said in the sentence or paragraph, and to get ready for what is to follow.

The rules for punctuation are not complex or hard to apply, once you thoroughly *know* them. Mistakes in punctuation are the result of ignorance with respect to these rules, or of unjustifiable carelessness. In either case, they may cause costly confusion of meaning and financial loss to the company represented by the letters in which they appear. Both the executive and his secretary need to understand these rules, and to respect them in the preparation of any written message for which they are jointly responsible. It is not fair to ask the secretary to carry all the load.



*Should punctuation be dictated?* In those cases where errors in punctuation appear in business letters, it is usually difficult to know who is to blame, the dictator or the transcriber. "I wanted a comma after this word," complains the dictator. "I am not a mind-reader," retorts the secretary. And so the battle rages! Of course, the dictator has the right to expect that his secretary understands the rules of punctuation, and usually she does. But he forgets that as her fingers dart rapidly over the keys, she is more concerned with correctness in typing than she is in grasping the continuity of thought. Hence, she is quite likely to transcribe only what she sees in her notes or hears on the wax record. She hasn't time to edit the copy, or to question the presence or omission of a punctuation mark.

Because of this psychological fact, it seems only good team-work for the dictator to help his secretary-typist by including the marks he wants used along with the words that he pours into the mouth-piece of the machine or into the girl's notebook. The thoughts of the dictator, and not those of the secretary, are being expressed, and he is in by far the best position to decide what punctuation marks are necessary to make the meaning absolutely clear. Sometimes, to be sure, an executive may be blessed with a helper who can be trusted to punctuate correctly anything that she types, but even one of these super-workers may not always have the same concept of the meaning intended, or the same judgment as to what mark may or may not be necessary.

The most competent letter-men, therefore, dictate punctuation marks as well as words. It is the one *sure* way of getting exactly what they want in the finished copy of each letter.

Yes (comma) Mr. Jones (comma) we have the part needed to repair your pump (semicolon) in fact (comma) we didn't want you to go a minute longer than necessary without water (comma) and a half hour after your letter was received we had the part at the post-office (period) It was sent airmail (comma) special delivery (comma) and you should have it early tomorrow morning (period and paragraph)

The trick of mastering this method of dictating is not too difficult. It may retard speed a little at first, but in a few days, even if you never have dictated this way before, your letters will be rolling off the assembly line just as fast as ever. Certainly, it relieves the secretary's burden, and the final result of your consideration will more than justify the effort.

All right! What are these punctuation marks, and the rules for their use?



*How and when to punctuate.* You are probably already familiar with the various marks and their general uses, but it may be that you are sometimes confused as to which mark is correct for a specific need. If this is so, the following review should remove all doubt, and help you to dictate punctuation marks without the slightest hesitation.

(1) The *period* is no doubt the most important of all the punctuation marks, although the one least often confused. Its major job is to tell the reader that he has reached the end of a sentence and may pause to consolidate his thinking. All declarative and imperative sentences close with periods. Anyone so ignorant as to disregard this fact would not be found writing letters in a business office. The period also performs other useful jobs. It is used to end an abbreviation, as a decimal point in figures, and to indicate the omission of part of a quoted passage. For the last mentioned purpose, three or more periods are necessary, instead of just one.

After abbreviations: Mr., G.A.R., Adv., Hon.

As a decimal point: \$109.85, 16.3 lbs.

To indicate omission: "And one man . . . plays many parts."

(2) The *question mark* takes the place of the period as a complete separation indicator if the sentence asks a direct question. This is supposed to be an *ABC* fact in the use of the English language, but nevertheless it is frequently disregarded by careless letter writers and their transcribers. No doubt, in numerous business communications, you have noticed the fault of ending interrogative sentences with periods instead of question marks. The fault is so common that in the correspondence of some companies question marks are seldom if ever used.

Wrong: How could you expect a larger discount.

Right: How could you expect a larger discount?

A great many business writers follow the custom of not using a question mark after an interrogative sentence to which no reply is expected. This is still an error in punctuation, although in the light of general usage it may be regarded with some tolerance.

Wrong: May we have your order soon.

Right: May we have your order soon?

Indirect questions do not require the question mark. Example:  
"My secretary is asking whether or not you will attend our sales



picnic.” However, if the same thought were expressed in the form of a quoted question, then the question mark would be necessary. “Are you going to attend our sales picnic?” my secretary is asking.

Confusion seems common with regard to *where* the question mark should be placed in connection with a quotation—inside or outside the quotation marks. But the answer to this problem is quite simple. If the quotation is only part of the question, the position is outside the quotation marks. If the complete question is quoted, the position is inside the quotation marks.

Right: Did you hear her sing “I’ll See You Again”?

Right: The captain cried, “Who will volunteer for this dangerous mission?”

Some writers also use a question mark in parentheses to put special emphasis on the uncertainty of something just mentioned, or to express sarcasm toward some thing or person. There is little to be said in favor of this device, and it should be used sparingly, if used at all. When overworked, as by some individuals, it becomes as naive as the habit of the ’teen-age girl who writes “ha, ha,” whenever she thinks she has said something clever.

If John keeps his pledge(?), he will make a good salesman.

Your promptness (?) in paying this bill is very much appreciated.

If weather permits (?), your order will be shipped Wednesday.

The gentleman (?) you call your salesman is not welcome in my store.

Question marks may also be used in a sequence of related questions, starting with the key one, and followed by several others in abbreviated form—as an airplane pulls several gliders. For example:

Having visited all of the training camps, how do you rate the Buckeyes this year? the Illini? the Badgers? the Wildcats?

(3) The *exclamation mark* may be used to close a word, a group of words, or a full sentence when the thought is more emotional or dramatic than the ordinary sentence carries. When not overdone, its use adds spice and color to business writing, especially in advertising copy and sales letters. With the exclamation mark, the writer can vary the monotony of conventional sentence forms, and thus create extra interest in the mind of his readers. Unfortunately, the majority of business men make small use of this punctuation



mark, probably because they have not learned what it can do for them.

Listen a few minutes to conversation on the street, in the office, or any place where people meet, and you will agree that everyday speech is not made up of a steady sweep of full-rounded sentences. Far from it! Instead, in between the sentences that do come out are numerous exclamations, couched in single words or short phrases, and adding life and interest to what might otherwise be rather dull language. Well, if we are still sticking to our major premise—that we should write as we *talk*—why shouldn't our letters have some of the same atmosphere? What's wrong with a word or phrase interjected in the flow of thought which makes the letter sound like a man *talking*? What's wrong, for that matter, with a dash of emotion? Is there anything so phlegmatic or academic about business that one connected with it cannot be his natural, interesting, often excitable, self? If you think business is immune to emotion, watch the sales manager as he nears the end of a quarter, with a fighting chance of making quota; watch the advertising director as he contemplates the million dollars he has risked on the new campaign, wondering if his judgment was sound. The "dignity of business" is only a pose—a thin shell which hides situations, experiences, frustrations, ambitions, as dramatic as any you will encounter in other walks of life.

Yes, we cast our vote for the exclamation mark, and the kind of business language which makes it necessary.

All right, Joe! You say you are discouraged, and you will be solving a problem for me by quitting. Nonsense! You never have been a problem to me in all these ten years we have worked together. Nobody here in the office wants you to quit, Joe. Nobody has been discouraged about *you*.

But there *is* a problem, Joe. Yours! It's in your own mind, and either it will lick you, or you will lick it.

We have no room for men who get discouraged, and start to pity themselves. You are right about that. If you really have lost your grip, if your blood has changed to water—okay! But I never expected to see the day when Joe Doe's guts ran out—when he couldn't take the rough spots with the smooth.

Sure! You can quit, or you can be your old self again, and tell me to tear up this damnfool resignation. But I'm not telling you *what* to do. The problem is in your lap, Joe—with a swell wife and three kids sitting on the sidelines to see how you solve it.

Listen! You go fishing next week at our expense. We owe you that for all the ten years you have fought the good fight and never weakened. So, go ahead, and see if you are too discouraged to catch a few big ones.



No argument about this, Joe! When you get back, write me your final decision. I still want you around. You know it! But you'll have to get those bugs out of your bonnet.

It's you in the driver's seat, Joe. Good luck!

From the above letter written by a sales manager—he got a telegram to tear up the resignation—you can see how handy exclamation marks can be. *All right, Joe! Nonsense! Yours! Okay! Sure! Listen! No argument about this, Joe! You know it! Good luck!* None of those words or phrases *had to be* in the sales manager's letter, but don't they add naturalness and power to it?

Of course, you may be saying that the situation of the salesman wanting to resign is naturally emotional, and not a fair sample of the more prosaic things generally handled in business letters. Yes, that is a very good comment. It is true that salesman Joe Doe left himself wide open to the personal, man-to-man language used by his sales manager. Most letter-situations in business are far less dramatic, but even if dry-as-dust can't they be handled in a human, conversational manner?

*Please!* Won't you sit down right *now* and write us a check? We know the amount of your bill is small, but with several thousand other customers also holding out on us, the size of the total might surprise you.

Your letter about the mistake in your assortment of canned goods leaves me with no explanation that would hold water. How we could have sent pears instead of peaches, I don't know. *Queer!* We did appreciate this first order, and wanted so much to please you. *Is my face red!*

*Right you are!* Your June bill is paid. The check and our letter must have crossed in the mail. *Sorry!* Please excuse us for the trouble we have caused you.

*Good news for you!* Effective July 1, you will be entitled to an extra discount of five per cent.

*Yes, indeed!* You can have two of our trucks all day Sunday, and we will supply the drivers. You folks at the Red Cross deserve our hearty cooperation. *Congratulations!* Feel free to come to us any time we can help.

*Listen!* We cannot sell your products unless you keep us supplied. Where is the shipment you said we could count on last week? We aren't angry. *Not much!* But it's bad business to change our customers over to your feed, and then run short. *Please!* Get on your horse, and give him the whip.

There you are! Even the run-of-the-mill letters can be made to sound as one man talking to another. There's a lot of power in an exclamatory word or phrase.



(4) The *comma* is the most frequently used of the several punctuation marks which do their work within the sentence, rather than at the end. This mark merely says to the reader that he should slow down; it doesn't say he must stop, as does the period. While the rules for using the comma may seem academic and "bookish," they all boil down to the purpose of helping to make clear the related parts of the sentence, so that the reader gets the intended meaning in the proper perspective. Commas are not hard to use correctly, if you understand the "why" of them. Some writers claim they know nothing about the rules, but that they can "feel" the need of a comma, as it appears in a sentence they are writing—a fallacy which may account for those business letters in which commas seem to have been scattered here and there as a man seeds his lawn.

Briefly, here are the more important things the letter-man and his secretary need to know about commas.

a. Use commas to keep apart the units of a series. In other words, the commas take the place of all except the last *and*.

John, Jerry, James, and Joseph are salesmen.

Good letter writers know how to relax, to be natural, and to just talk.

Some writers omit the comma and let *and* do the whole job between the last two units of the series. This is permissible if you happen to like it.

John, Jerry, James and Joseph are salesmen.

b. Use commas to mark off appositive modifiers which could be left out without damaging the meaning of the sentence.

The Illinois team, *out-weighted and handicapped by inexperience*, held the powerful Minnesota team scoreless until the last quarter.

This bill, *long over-due*, must be paid immediately.

In Ohio, *his home state*, they call Bricker "Honest John."

These two salesmen, *Minton and McNulty*, are always near the top.

However, the commas are not necessary if the connection between modifier and antecedent is very close.

He *himself* admits the bill is unconstitutional.

My brother *Bill* went through the war unwounded.



c. Use commas between clauses when the order is inverted, as in the following examples. A tip that a comma will be needed before the main clause is provided when the sentence starts with a subordinating conjunction or with a word ending with *ing*.

As requested in your telegram, we have increased your order by six dozen sets.

Because of the limited supply, we cannot hold these goods for you later than Saturday.

Working night and day, John Doe managed to finish first in the sales contest.

If these terms are agreeable, please confirm the sale by return mail.

Pending your reply, we will defer the scheduled shipment.

Though it may seem harsh, we must refuse additional credit until a substantial payment is received.

d. Use commas to mark off the nominative of address.

Soldiers, today we do or die.

Yes, Mr. Jones, we will be glad to inspect your samples Wednesday morning.

e. Use commas to mark off parenthetical expressions or words.

You must understand, *therefore*, why we cannot wait any longer for our money.

The crowd, sensing it was time for the kill, gave forth a mighty roar.

Of course, we still mean to fill this order.

We still have faith, Mr. Doe, that you are big enough to solve this problem.

Hard work, and not luck, will bring you success.

This contract, which you read carefully before signing, cannot be tossed aside.

A fact to remember is that a comma is never used before a verb unless its twin has previously appeared in the sentence.

Wrong: The batter trying for a home-run, took a vicious cut at the ball.

Right: The batter, trying for a home-run, took a vicious cut at the ball.



Omitting the first of the two commas in similar sentences, is a common error in transcribing. Guard against it.

f. Use commas to mark off introductory words or phrases and abbreviations which do the same job.

*For example*, consider the similar emergency of last year.

*Well*, why shouldn't a man write as he talks?

We can send at once only three of the items, *namely*, the hose, the washing powder, and the hardware for the door.

The man must have been asleep; *otherwise*, why was he driving on the wrong side of the road?

He has many outstanding qualities; e.g., a capacity for enthusiasm which makes many a sale.

g. Use commas in place of omitted words. For example:

Columbus, Ohio. (Columbus *in* Ohio)

January 1, 1947. (January 1 *in* 1947)

The regular gas is twenty cents; the ethyl, twenty-two cents. (The ethyl *is* twenty-two cents.)

The first penalty was for illegal use of the hands; the second, for backfield in motion. (The second *was for* backfield in motion.)

h. When *and* appears in a sentence as a connective between words, phrases, or clauses, a comma is usually considered unnecessary, since there is no interruption in the unity of thought. However, a comma is used before *but* because that which follows in the sentence veers away from the thought which preceded.

Your suit is finished and you may have it this afternoon. (No comma needed before *and*)

We appreciate your interest in our company, but there are no vacancies at present for which you might be qualified. (Comma before *but*)

Other conjunctions which introduce a break or change in thought also require the comma.

Our supply of the one-pound size is sold out, *so* we are shipping half as many of the two-pound boxes.

We have filed your order to take its turn, *although* we can make no promises as to date of shipment.



i. Use commas to separate direct quotations from other parts of the sentence. Omit them if the quotation is indirect.

“Bad luck,” the sales manager told his men, “is an excuse I will never accept.”

“There isn’t any bad luck that hard work won’t destroy,” said the sales manager.

The sales manager said, “Only the weak talk about bad luck.”

All of the above are direct quotations, but notice that commas are not used in the following indirect quotations.

The sales manager told his men that he would never accept bad luck as an excuse.

It is the sales manager’s opinion that hard work will offset any bad luck.

The sales manager said that only weak men talk about bad luck.

When a verb precedes the direct quotation, some writers make an exception of the rule demanding a comma, but most of the authorities do not approve this practice.

The salesman retorted “You look after collections and let me do the selling.” (No comma after retorted)

j. Use commas to mark off *explanatory* modifiers starting with who, which, and that; do not use commas if the modifiers are restrictive.

Explanatory: Our credit correspondents, who are college graduates, are doing a remarkable job.

Restrictive: Business executives who are interested in better letters are meeting at this clinic.

To know whether or not a modifier explains or restricts, see if the direct statement is unchanged when the modifier is removed. If not, then the modifier is explanatory. If the meaning is incomplete without the modifier, then it is restrictive.

In the above example, we are told that the credit correspondents are doing a swell job. This statement is complete without the modifier that they are college graduates.

In the second sentence, however, the direct statement is that



business executives are meeting at the clinic. Without the modifier (which is restrictive) we do not know the reason why they are meeting. Not all business executives are there—only those interested in better letters.

k. Use commas to make large numbers easier to read. The separation comes between sequences of three figures, starting to the left of the decimal point. It is not customary, however, to make these separations in writing serial numbers.

You owe us \$11,112.21 for purchases made during the month of July.

The weight of the load is 3,400 pounds.

When the last census was taken, 5,498,732 persons were living in this State.

The serial number of the motor is MX293871.

(5) The *semicolon* indicates a greater degree of separation than the comma. It is especially valuable in sentences of several clauses which contain a number of commas for other purposes. Thus, commas are like the small railroad stations at which momentary stops are made; semicolons are like the larger stations where major stops occur.

The semicolon could be used to advantage in business letters more frequently than it is. Perhaps the reason is that the average transcriber is not sure exactly how and when to use it, and so turns to the comma with which she is more familiar. For those who share this confusion, the following explanation should be helpful.

a. Use a semicolon to separate clauses in a compound sentence when one of them is introduced by such conjunctions as *thus*, *hence*, *otherwise*, *therefore*, *accordingly*, and the like.

He has been too soft-hearted with customers; *otherwise*, there would not be so many of these unpaid accounts.

You admit not doing an honest job in your territory; *therefore*, we are forced to ask for your resignation.

Coach Elliot knew his team lacked power; *accordingly*, he relied on end sweeps and forward passes.

b. Use a semicolon between co-ordinate clauses or phrases closely allied in meaning.

His sales were few; his excuses, amazing.

Mistakes can be overlooked; lies about them, never.



c. Use a semicolon between word groups in which minor separations are indicated by commas.

As you say, the Doe Company has always paid its bills; however, in view of this credit report, you cannot afford to be too lenient.

Just when a scoreless tie appeared certain, the break came for Yale; with thirty seconds left to play, Doe's punt was blocked, and Yale took the ball on the five-yard line.

d. Use a semicolon in long sentences to separate independent groups.

He knew that lack of materials would limit production, and that sales needed no stimulation; however, he also realized the danger of losing public acceptance by not advertising.

e. Use a semicolon when wishing to high-light each unit in a series.

It was a great example of co-ordination: the blocking was superb; the line charged savagely; the passes were thrown with deadly accuracy; never had the team looked so good.

These letters are outstanding: the language is natural; the facts are clearly presented; the spirit is friendly; the typing is beautiful.

f. Use a semicolon between independent clauses in a compound sentence to indicate the omission of a conjunction.

With conjunction: A few contributed, *but* the majority refused.

With semicolon: A few contributed; the majority refused.

(6) The *colon* is used when the break in thought is blunt and sharp. It ranks next to the period in indicating degree of separation. The uses are as follows:

a. Use a colon between independent units which have no connecting word, and when the first unit points to the second.

Our public relations program can be stated in five words: fair play and good manners.

We can now be sure he will make good as a salesman: his record the first six months has been even better than expected.

b. Use a colon in a sentence where a general fact is advanced, followed by specific explanation.



He has three outstanding qualities: resourcefulness, the willingness to work long and hard, and a genuine enthusiasm for any task.

The sale is unusual: the merchandise is of highest quality; the prices are far below market value; the terms are so easy that anyone can buy.

c. Use a colon before a quotation. If the latter is short, some writers prefer a comma. The comma is perhaps less formal.

As nearly as I can remember, the accused said: "I lost my temper and hit him with the bottle; it was not my intention to kill him."

He said: "You can depend on me, absolutely."

She said: "Yes." (Or) She said, "Yes." (Or) She said "Yes."

d. Use a colon after the salutation, and after such words as *Subject* and *Attention* when they introduce captions above the body of a business letter.

Dear Mr. Doe:

Gentlemen:

Subject: July Sales Contest

Attention: Mr. John Doe

e. Use a colon to separate the hour and minutes to indicate time. A period is also correct, but most writers seem to prefer the colon.

9:30 a.m. (Or) 9.30 a.m.

(7) The *dash* is a useful punctuation mark, but may not be used promiscuously. Because so many writers use it without cause as a substitute for the comma, semicolon, or colon, it holds small favor among the authorities. When not worked to death, however, the dash is an effective tool in the letter-man's kit. With the possible exception of the exclamation mark, it serves to gain the greatest attention—a purpose which has special value in sales letters. This means that the attention value tends to decrease in proportion to the number of times that the dash is used in a single paragraph. Too many dashes disturb the flow of thought, so that the reader suffers a series of jerks, and the effect is no more pleasing than when his car sputters and spits on a cold morning. Do not be afraid to use the dash, but do it sparingly.

a. Use the dash to show an abrupt change in thought.



You have flouted the power God gave you—you walk the “low way” when your destiny was the “high way.”

Surely it is best to settle this account as we have suggested—lawyers cost money, you know.

b. Use the dash to mark off parenthetical expressions. This is also a function of the comma, but the dash indicates a greater degree of separation.

I’ve watched thousands of men—young and old—in their struggle to become a “somebody.”

A little jab here, a little jab there—’round and ’round—never working with a plan.

The papers already signed—contract, mortgage, and deed—will be sufficient.

c. Use the dash to indicate an interruption in thought.

You will do it our way or—well, after all we have the right to expect loyalty from any employee.

Pay this bill by Saturday or—.

d. Use the dash to separate parts of a sentence where the intention is to indicate hesitation or lack of continuity.

John, this is the first time I have done this—well, maybe the second—or, at least—what’s the use of hedging—I just forgot, and that’s the truth.

(8) The *parenthesis* has less to be said for it than the dash. Too often a pair is used as a convenient device for inserting material which should have been a normal part of the sentence. Other times, without the slightest justification, the parentheses are substituted for commas or dashes. However, they do serve a few useful purposes, as when the material inserted is a technical reference or something entirely remote from what goes before or after.

a. Use parentheses when a factual reference needs to be inserted without interrupting the flow of thought.

Joe Brown (Harvard, 1920) made the best speech at the University Club banquet.

Your contract (Page 2, Item A) covers this point thoroughly.

b. Use parentheses for the insertion of dates when you wish to keep them apart from the main body of the sentence.



The date of birth (October 29, 1894) was inadvertently left out in preparing the questionnaire.

For three exciting days (Monday through Wednesday) you can take advantage of the greatest sale in our history.

c. Use parentheses to include a comment aside from the general thought of the sentence, as when an actor gives a line to the audience which the others on the stage are not supposed to hear.

He claims (take it with a grain of salt) that the bank erred in returning his check.

His explanation (alibi) was that the prospect was too busy to talk to him.

By great effort (?), he actually sold seven cases yesterday.

d. Use parentheses to verify a written number, but do so only in legal or formal copy where the repetition is considered absolutely necessary.

Wrong: The price of seven dollars (\$7.00) is the very best we can offer.

Legal: For a consideration of three thousand dollars (\$3,000) the party of the first part . . . .

(9) The *apostrophe* is a punctuation mark used in several ways; all are quite simple, but very often confused. In fact, this little mark probably suffers more abuse than any of the others in the punctuation family. Even some of our good writers are sometimes guilty of not using the mark where there should be one, or of placing it in the wrong position. Consider the types of usage described below, and be sure never to let this inconspicuous mark bring ridicule to one of your letters.

a. Use the apostrophe to show possession. Do not forget that the possessor is indicated by that part of the word which comes in front of the apostrophe, no matter whether the word is singular or plural.

The salesman's charts . . . charts of the salesman

The salesmen's charts . . . charts of the salesmen

The executive's club . . . club of the executive

The executives' club . . . club of the executives

Mr. Doe's automobile . . . automobile of Mr. Doe

\*Mr. Does' automobile . . . automobile of Mr. Does

\*Mr. Does's automobile . . . automobile of Mr. Does

\* Either of these two forms is correct, but the use of the apostrophe without the addition *s* is preferred.



b. Use the apostrophe to take the place of missing letters in a contraction. Contractions are not objectionable except in very formal writing.

didn't (did not)	isn't (is not)
we're (we are)	we'll (we will)
you're (you are)	won't (will not)
aren't (are not)	I'd (I would)
couldn't (could not)	it's (it is)
'til (until)	o'clock (of the clock)

A very common error is confusion between the contraction *it's* (it is) and the possessive pronoun *its*, which of course requires no apostrophe.

You will like *it's* (it is) compact size, *it's* (it is) sureness in taking fire, and *it's* (it is) uncanny ability to stay lit in the highest wind.

In the illustration just cited, the writer fell into the trap of using the contraction *it's* three times instead of the intended possessive form *its*. When you read the contractions in full, you see how ridiculous such errors can be.

c. Use the apostrophe to indicate the plural of abbreviations, letters, figures, and certain words.

How many *i's* are there in permissible?

His sentences are full of *and's* and *but's*.

He threw six consecutive *7's*, and then four *11's*.

We have three *Ph.D.'s* on our sales force.

(10) *Quotation marks* are used to enclose something written or spoken, word for word, by another person. They are not generally abused except in relation to other marks; the confusion results from not being sure which mark comes first. Note the following rules.

a. Periods and commas are always placed *inside* the quotation mark.

"Let those who are afraid stay behind," called the young captain.

The young captain called, "Let those who are afraid stay behind."

b. Semicolons and colons are always placed *outside* the quotation mark.



Our president spoke last month to the Advertising Club on the subject, "I believe in high wages"; but we are still waiting for proof in our pay envelopes.

The title of the book is "This Way Up": cartoons profusely illustrate the copy.

c. Other marks are placed inside the quotation if part of it; outside, if not.

Inside: She asked, "When will you stop smoking?"

Outside: Who said, "Life is but a walking shadow"?

Inside: He cried, "Give me liberty or give me death!"

Outside: You are just a "cry-baby"!

d. When a writer purposely makes a grammatical error, he "saves face" by using quotation marks to tell the reader he realized what he was doing.

Brother, you "have did" me wrong!

Your sales report for last week gave us all a big thrill; it was really a "whangdoodle."

The same device, of course, may be used when slang or a colloquialism is considered appropriate for the letter but the writer is not willing to take full responsibility. The quotation marks show that he knew better, but went ahead anyway—a rather amusing distinction.

e. Quotation marks are commonly used to enclose titles of magazine articles, names of songs, and the names of chapter headings. For some reason hard to explain, book titles are usually handled differently. If printed, they usually appear in italics without the quotation marks; if typed, they are either underlined or quoted.

f. Quotation marks may properly be used to give special emphasis to one or more words considered important by the writer.

If he is a "Salesman," then I am a plumber.

These new packages have more "glamour" than a Hollywood starlet.

Let's "give our all" to this contest.

g. Single quotation marks are used to enclose one quotation within another.



This bulletin says: "Every salesman should read the funeral oration in 'Julius Caesar.' "

Note that the period is placed within the single quotation mark.

(11) The *hyphen* is a handy punctuation mark, used mostly as a connecting link in compound words.

a. Use the hyphen to combine words or phrases of close relation.

hard-fought	hand-carved
twenty-pound	man-to-man
mother-in-law	never-say-die

b. Use the hyphen as a substitute for *to* when indicating a stretch or coverage in time, pages, and the like.

1920-1948	pp. 113-121
Items C-F	Volumes IV-VII

c. Use the hyphen to join letters and numbers for identification purposes.

No. D-3354	Invoice 546-K
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d. Use the hyphen to separate syllables when a word has to be divided at the end of a line.

The number of *spaces* that should be used in connection with the typing of punctuation marks is fairly well standardized, although variations are occasionally noted. The following is a guide that may safely be followed.

After a period . . . . .	2 spaces
“ question mark . . . . .	2 “
“ exclamation mark . . . . .	2 “
(One space if within the sentence)	
“ comma . . . . .	1 space
(No space if between figures)	
“ semicolon . . . . .	1 “
“ colon . . . . .	2 spaces
“ and before dash . . . . .	0 “
“ and before hyphen . . . . .	0 “
Inside parentheses . . . . .	0 “
Outside parentheses . . . . .	1 space
Inside quotation marks . . . . .	0 spaces
Outside quotation marks . . . . .	1 space



*A Letter Incorrectly Punctuated*

Dear Mr. Doe:

Perhaps you read in the New York Times the story which appeared a week, or two, ago about weather cycles: and what to expect this year.

According to that prediction you folks, up North, are in for one of those nerve racking—old fashioned—winters like the one you had four years ago! You must remember that winter—twenty to thirty degrees below zero—ice over the streets, for weeks and weeks,—business men snow bound from their offices—children kept out of school.

But in Florida; glamorous sun blessed Florida; it won't make any difference. While a lot of nice people, up your way, are skidding, and shivering, going about in greatcoats, and galoshes, suffering from colds, and influenza, counting the long months before they can go fishing, or shoot a game of golf—thousands of other families, will be down in our state—sun tanning on the beaches, playing tennis in shorts, fishing, swimming, sailing, charging their bodies with new energy—in a climate, truly, the world's best.

Maybe you have spent winters in Florida and don't need any invitation, to come again to our sunny land—just next door to Heaven. But if you have'nt why not resolve, now, to give yourself, and your family, a heap of happiness by making the sunshine trek, this year.

There are many fine folks in Florida—hospitable—friendly—glad to have you with them. Furthermore you won't have to worry about where to stay. The folder, enclosed, tells with pictures which are better than words, about some of the furnished homes and apartments waiting for your comfort, and pleasure. They are just a small sample of the many fine places available, through our organization—places to match any need, or purse.

Take a peek at these pictures: and write to us. Just say—"We are thinking of a visit to Florida, this winter, and here are the accommodations we will need". Then—we will send you photographs, and detailed information, on properties, we think, you will enjoy. Do this please and don't feel obligated, ours is a friendly service and we like to help, in any way we can.

Cordially, yours,

Use this letter to test your knowledge of the rules for punctuation. See how many errors you can correct *before* looking at the revision on the opposite page.



*The Same Letter Revised*

Dear Mr. Doe:

Perhaps you read in the New York Times the story which appeared a week or two ago, about weather cycles and what to expect this year.

According to that prediction, you folks up North are in for one of those nerve-racking, old-fashioned winters—like the one you had four years ago. You must remember that winter: twenty to thirty degrees below zero; ice over the streets for weeks and weeks; business men snow-bound from their offices; children kept out of school.

But in Florida—glamorous sun-blessed Florida—it won't make any difference. While a lot of nice people up your way are skidding and shivering; going about in greatcoats and galoshes; suffering from colds and influenza; counting the long months before they can go fishing, or shoot a game of golf—thousands of other families will be down in our state: sun-tanning on the beaches; playing tennis in shorts; fishing, swimming, sailing; charging their bodies with new energy in a climate truly the world's best.

Maybe you have spent winters in Florida, and don't need any invitation to come to our sunny land, just next door to Heaven. But if you haven't, why not resolve now to give yourself and your family a heap of happiness by making the sunshine trek this year?

There are many fine folks in Florida—hospitable, friendly, glad to have you with them. Furthermore, you won't have to worry about where to stay. The folder enclosed tells with pictures which are better than words, about some of the furnished homes and apartments waiting for your comfort and pleasure. They are just a small sample of the many fine places available through our organization—places to match any need or purse.

Take a peek at these pictures, and write to us. Just say, "We are thinking of a visit to Florida this winter, and here are the accommodations we will need." Then we will send you photographs and detailed information on properties we think you will enjoy. Do this, please, and don't feel obligated. Ours is a friendly service, and we like to help in any way we can.

Cordially yours,

The revision may not be punctuated to please all of the authorities, but probably you will agree that the changes make the letter easier to read. The punctuation marks *help* rather than hinder the flow of thought—and that is the chief purpose of punctuation.



## 7. *Devices to Make Reading Easier*

*Paragraphing.* We have noted that short words and short sentences tend to improve the effectiveness of a business letter because they impose less strain on the reader's mind than do long words and long sentences. In like manner, the thought is easier to absorb if the paragraphs are not too formidable, and so constructed that each one covers a separate and complete unit of the message. The reader knows at the beginning of each paragraph that the previous division of thought has been completed, and that he is about to be presented with a new one. Of course, this is true only when the paragraphing has been done by a competent and logical thinker. A paragraph composed of unrelated material causes confusion, and hinders the assimilation of the central thought.

The chief responsibility for the arrangement of paragraphs in logical and compact form belongs to the dictator. If he has planned his letter properly, he knows what points he intends to present, and in what order. When one point has been thoroughly covered, he is ready to say "new paragraph," and proceed to the next, which will present a new point, completely and without digression. However, if the point is complex and requires lengthy discussion, the dictator faces the choice of using a long paragraph, or of breaking the thought into several paragraphs to cover separate sub-points. The choice of several shorter paragraphs is preferable, since a lengthy one is tiresome to the eye and tends to repel the reader before he has started to read the letter.

Placing the burden of responsibility on the dictator does not mean, however, that the competent secretary has no part in proper paragraphing. When she notices that her superior has forgotten to signal a new paragraph, she may without exceeding her authority go ahead on her own initiative, and make the division in the copy which she is typing. Moreover, some dictators make no pretense of indicating paragraph beginnings. In this case, even though it cannot be approved as the best practice, the secretary must do the best she can to make the paragraphs presentable and logically cut to the pattern of what seems to have been the dictator's intention.

We have seen paragraphs that filled an entire page of typing, and many more that ran a half page or longer. This indicates both careless and loose thinking on the part of the dictator, and a low grade of efficiency on the part of the typist or secretary. The influence of these long paragraphs cannot possibly be favorable. They tell the reader that the letter is going to be difficult to read, and they set up a negative mental attitude which puts the writer behind the eight ball at the very start. This fact is well recognized



by the majority of business letter-writers, and the modern trend is toward paragraphs which will not impose on the eye or mind of the reader. Sometimes the tendency is overdone, with each paragraph consisting of a single sentence or a couple of short ones. This succession of small bits of copy is just as objectionable as the other extreme. Hence, you will gain the best results by sticking to the middle of the road, and making your paragraphs neither *too long* nor *too short*.

One factor influencing length of paragraphs is the nature of the message in the letter. Certain phases of business, for example, are more technical and complicated than others. The paragraphs in a sales or adjustment letter might be expected to run somewhat longer than in a letter which merely thanks a customer for his order or asks when a bill is to be paid.

Another variable factor is the mental background of both writer and reader. Probably the head of the Department of English in a large university is more accustomed to reading material arranged in long paragraphs, than is his landlord, who happens to be a man of no great education or native intelligence. In the same sense, one writer may be able to use longer paragraphs, and make them easier to read, than is another. As in all other aspects of business letter-writing, paragraphing should take into consideration the probable reading habits and intellectual status of the individual to whom the letter is addressed. Generally, you may be sure that it is better to write short paragraphs than long ones—no matter who the potential reader may happen to be.

*Highlighting special material.* In many business letters there are certain facts or figures which the writer is particularly anxious that the reader shall remember. In such cases, the special material may be highlighted by contrasting forms of indentation, by tabulation, or by some other similar method. Facts buried in the middle of a paragraph are much more likely to be overlooked by the reader than when they are given a more prominent display. For example, consider the different typings of the following letter to a salesman.

Dear Jimmy:

First, let me tell you that I am much pleased with the way you have taken hold in your new territory. If you keep on at the same pace, there is a big bonus assured for you at the end of the year. Your success gives me personal satisfaction, because as you know there was some opposition to your appointment on account of your youth.

During the coming week, I want you to spend a day in Cairo. Talk to John Doe, president of the Doe Implement Company, and see if you can revive his business. He was a steady buyer



until last December, when he suddenly left us cold. Probably something happened to displease him, although I cannot think what it could be. Also, while in Cairo, see old man Roe again. You said last month that he would make a substantial payment on his account, but nothing has happened. Be courteous, but make it plain that we are about ready to call on the lawyers to get our money. In Centralia, be sure to get the contract signed with Black and Black. You seem confident this business will jell, but from my own field experience I can tell you that no order is any good until the buyer puts his John Henry on the dotted line.

Here in the office, we are going ahead with plans for the national convention. This will be your first, and I know you will get a tremendous kick out of it. By the way, if you want a room reservation, don't neglect returning the card to Hotel Jefferson—the one sent to you three weeks ago. If you overlook doing this, it will be your hard luck as there won't be a chance to get a room after you arrive.

Again, Jimmy, I compliment you on your efforts. You may not be satisfied to see your name twenty-ninth on the list, but that is a fine rating for a beginner, and I have no doubt before the year is over, you will be crowding the leaders.

Report to me on the matters I have mentioned.

Sincerely yours,

Probably, Jimmy was pleased with the letter from his boss. But in addition to the compliments, it contains certain instructions which are more or less covered up in the body of the message. Without any major changes in wording, these instructions could have been highlighted by the following form of typing.

Dear Jimmy:

First, let me tell you that I am much pleased with the way you have taken hold in your new territory. If you keep on at the same pace, there is a big bonus assured for you at the end of the year. Your success gives me personal satisfaction, because as you know there was some opposition to your appointment on account of your youth.

Jimmy, along with your other calls, here are three things I want you to do this coming week.

1. Talk to John Doe, president of the Doe Implement Company, in Cairo, and find out why he stopped buying from us last December. An order from him will be another feather in your cap.
2. While in Cairo, also see old man Roe again. He has not made the substantial payment, as promised to you last



month. Be courteous, but make it plain we are ready to call on the lawyers to get our money.

3. In Centralia, be sure to get the contract signed with Black and Black. An order is never an order until the buyer's John Henry goes on the dotted line.

*Be sure to report to me on these three special assignments by the end of the week.*

Here in the office, we are going ahead with plans for the national convention. This will be your first, and I know you will get a tremendous kick out of it. By the way, if you want a room reservation,

don't neglect returning the card  
to Hotel Jefferson—the one sent  
to you three weeks ago.

If you overlook doing this, it will be your hard luck, as there won't be a chance to get a room after you arrive.

Again, Jimmy, I compliment you on your efforts. You may not be satisfied to see your name twenty-ninth on the list, but that is a fine rating for a beginner, and I have no doubt before the year is over, you will be crowding the leaders.

Sincerely yours,

Your eye tells you that numbering and indenting the three points gives them a special emphasis they did not have in the first version of the letter. In the same way, the indentation highlights the reference to the room reservation. With these assignments so prominently displayed, Jimmy is not likely to forget or neglect them.

Explanatory material presented in tabulated form is usually easier to read and understand than when worked into the body of paragraphs. For example, compare the two typed forms that follow.

Thank you, Mrs. Doe, for writing, and for the payment of \$5.00 to apply against your unpaid bills. We appreciate the effort you are making to bring your account up to date, and your offer to send us another payment of \$5.00 in two weeks is quite satisfactory.

The total amount which you still owe is \$16.35, and not \$14.00 as mentioned in your letter. The difference of \$2.35 is the amount of the March bill, which you thought was paid. The confusion, no doubt, is caused by the fact that both the February and March bills were for the same amount. The receipt you enclosed covered the February bill, but left the one for March still unpaid.



SECRETARIAL CO-OPERATION

Since the first of January, you have made four payments: \$3.42 against the January bill; \$2.35 against the February bill; \$3.29 against the April bill; and your latest payment of \$5.00. This is a total of \$14.06.

During the same period, the following bills have been issued: January, \$3.42; February, \$2.35; March, \$2.35; April, \$3.29; May, \$4.01; June, \$3.17; July, \$3.99; August, \$4.10; and September, \$3.73—a total of \$30.41.

Thus when you deduct the total paid from the total billed, there is a balance of \$16.35 still due.

We hope these figures are clear to you, Mrs. Doe, but if you have any question to ask about them, we will be very glad to answer it. It was nice to know that your husband has now recovered after his long illness, and that he has found such a good job.

Cordially yours,

The above letter is about as clear as any exposition could be, but the many figures make the deciphering a slow process. When these figures are tabulated, the job is much simpler.

Thank you, Mrs. Doe, for writing, and for the payment of \$5.00 to apply against your unpaid bills. We appreciate the effort you are making to bring your account up to date, and your offer to send us another payment of \$5.00 in two weeks is quite satisfactory.

The total amount which you still owe is \$16.35, and not \$14.00 as mentioned in your letter. The difference of \$2.35 is the amount of the March bill, which you thought was paid. The confusion, no doubt, is caused by the fact that both the February and March bills were for the same amount. The receipt you enclosed covered the February bill, but left the one for March still unpaid.

<i>Bills</i>		<i>Payments</i>	
January	\$3.42	\$3.42	Paid February 2
February	\$2.35	\$2.35	" March 22
March	\$2.35	\$3.29	" May 6
April	\$3.29	\$5.00	" November 6
May	\$4.01		
June	\$3.17	\$14.06	Total
July	\$3.99		
August	\$4.10		
September	\$3.73		
Total	\$30.41		
Less	\$14.06		

\$16.35    The amount you still owe.



We hope these figures are clear to you, Mrs. Doe, but if you have any question to ask about them, we will be very glad to answer it. It was nice to know that your husband has now recovered after his long illness, and that he has found such a good job.

Cordially yours.

Obviously, this second version of the letter is easier and quicker to read. It could hardly be misunderstood. Business letter writers should use these and similar forms of typing to clarify the letter's message, and to put emphasis on items that deserve it.

## 8. *Marks for Proofreading and Editing*

*Secretary needs to know them.* Very few of the texts covering the various phases of letter-writing devote any space to proofreading marks. Apparently, the authors have ruled them out, because their major purpose is to check the correctness of printed copy—a purpose remote from making sure that a business letter is accurately typed and in the proper shape for mailing. Nevertheless, we think a competent secretary needs to know these marks, as surely there will be times in her business career when she will have to know them.

The secretary of the advertising manager may be asked to check the proofs of ads, booklets, and other promotional literature. The treasurer's secretary may have to read proof for his annual report, to be presented in printed form. The secretary of the director of research may find himself going over pamphlets that deal with experiments and their results. The president's secretary may have to prepare copy and read proof for his radio speech which is to be distributed to all branch managers and salesmen. In all of these cases, corrections or changes must be marked for the printer with the symbols he understands.

From the utility viewpoint, proofreading marks serve a double purpose; they conserve marginal space, and they save time for the individual who reads the copy. It is much quicker to write "caps" than "put in capitals," much quicker to write "stet" than "disregard my correction, and use in the original form." Furthermore, the printer is also able to work faster and without confusion if he sees on the corrected proofs the marks with which he is thoroughly familiar rather than assorted written instructions (clear or vague).

*Standard proofreading marks.* On the following page, these are illustrated and defined. Then, immediately after, appears one page of printed copy marked to show what corrections need to be



made. It will pay you to study these two pages long enough to master these symbols, and to understand exactly how to use them. It is by such forms of specialized knowledge, beyond the mere knowing how to take dictation and type, that a secretary may lift her level of efficiency above the average—and profit accordingly.

^	Make correction indicated in margin.	⌈	Raise to proper position.
<del>Stet</del>	Retain crossed-out word or letter; let it stand.	⌋	Lower to proper position.
....	Retain words under which dots appear; write "Stet" in margin.	///	Hair space letters.
<del>Stet</del>		<i>w.f.</i>	Wrong font; change to proper font.
x	Appears battered; examine.	<i>Qu?</i>	Is this right?
≡	Straighten lines.	<i>l.c.</i>	Put in lower case (small letters).
<i>Ni</i>	Unevenly spaced; correct spacing.	<i>s.c.</i>	Put in small capitals.
//	Line up; i.e., make lines even with other matter.	<i>Caps</i>	Put in capitals.
<i>run in</i>	Make no break in the reading; no ¶	<i>Crsc.</i>	Put in caps and small caps.
<i>no ¶</i>	No paragraph; sometimes written "run in."	<i>rom.</i>	Change to Roman.
<i>out copy</i>	Here is an omission; see copy.	<i>ital.</i>	Change to Italic.
¶	Make a paragraph here.	≡	Under letter or word means caps.
<i>tr</i>	Transpose words or letters as indicated.	=	Under letter or word, small caps.
<i>h</i>	Take out matter indicated; dele.	—	Under letter or word means Italic.
<i>£</i>	Take out character indicated and close up.	~	Under letter or word. bold face.
<i>£</i>	Line drawn through a cap means lower case.	∕	Insert comma.
⑨	Upside down; reverse.	∕	Insert semicolon.
∩	Close up; no space.	∕	Insert colon.
#	Insert a space here.	○	Insert period.
⊥	Push down this space.	/?	Insert interrogation mark.
□	Indent line one em.	(!)	Insert exclamation mark.
⌈	Move this to the left.	/=	Insert hyphen.
⌋	Move this to the right.	✓	Insert apostrophe.
		“”	Insert quotation marks.
		ⁱ	Insert superior letter or figure.
		₱	Insert inferior letter or figure.
		[/]	Insert brackets.
		(/)	Insert parenthesis.
		—	One-em dash.
		—	Two-em parallel dash.

*Symbols for editing copy.* Along with the standard proofreading marks, another set of symbols has been developed by custom for the editing of typed copy. In some respects but not all, they are similar to the proofreading marks; however, one difference is that the symbols are not placed in the margins to call attention to corrections. These symbols are familiar to all editors, printers, and copy-readers, and they lend themselves very well to the correcting



The number of these symbols for editing copy is not so large as

that of the regular proofreading marks, since many of the latter apply only to letters and words set by hand or machine and have no significance in correcting typed material. For example, a letter cannot be typed upside down; nor can it be typed in the wrong font. Proofreading marks that call attention to those errors are meaningless for typed copy.



*Edited sales letter.* Following is the first draft of a sales letter, edited for the second typing. The marks are explained to the left of the letter, but of course no explanation was necessary on the original.

Spell out  
Period  
Comma  
Paragraph  
Quote

Semicolon

Transpose letters

One word

Run in

Omit letter

Don't change

Transpose words

Insert letter

Capitalize

All caps.

Two words

Omit words

Hyphen

Apostrophe

You have said to yourself a (100) times, "Some~~day~~  
I must have my eyes checked~~d~~. You said it last  
month, last year, and the year before -- but you  
just don't get around to it. <sup>It</sup> Funny, isn't it?  
A man stops for gasoline, and says, <sup>✓</sup> "You might  
check the battery too." He reads about termites  
and the harm they can do; immediately he is off  
to his basement to look for them. He gets a  
little cou~~g~~, and rushes to the doctor, to find  
out if his lungs are okeh. He buys scales for  
his bath room, so he can keep daily check of his  
weight.

He checks this, and checks that; but he never  
gives a kind thought to his vision.

Day in, and day out, he takes his eyes for  
granted. He worries about a kink in his chest,  
and about oil in his car, but he thinks his eyes  
will perform forever without the <sup>(Set)</sup> slightest attention.  
Yes, he thinks that until the day of reckoning --  
and then (is it) too late.

Yes, this letter comes from one who makes  
his bread <sup>and</sup> butter by taking care of eyes.  
For that reason, you may be saying, "oh, he's  
only trying to drum up a little business for  
himself." But making money is not the biggest  
reward in my work. I know what neglect can do  
to your eyes. Even if my letter sends you to  
some other ey~~d~~octor, I will be glad you went.

Neglecting your vision is a poor ~~game after all~~.  
Don't play it. Stop in tomorrow, and let me ex-  
amine your eyes. Or go to someone else. But  
do it tomorrow. Please, for your own sake, don't  
put it off.

Sincerely yours,

As in any other aspect of secretarial skill, efficiency in reading proof or editing copy must depend on two factors: first, how



thoroughly the marks are mastered; and second, how constantly they are used. The saying that "practice makes perfect" is trite, but also it is true.

A plan used by many instructors is to pass to students copies of galley proofs secured from printing or publishing companies. These proofs are exactly as taken from the type, and before the experts have had a chance to correct them. The marking of several of these galley proofs, and checking back to see if the right marks have been used, will quickly develop skill in the art of proofreading. The plan is not copyrighted; you should be able to secure galley proofs from your local printer. How, for example, would you mark the one that follows?

### FAMOUS LEFT HANDERS\*

It is a breadth-taking moment in the annal football game between the two old rivals—*Notre Dame* and *Northwestern* in the fall of 1936.

Neither team has scored and the game is drawing near the close.

"Parisien going in for Notre Dame," bellows the voice from the loud speaker.

A play is called. The ball goes to this newcomer Parisien. He takes a few steps backward. From out of his left hand after a mighty sweep of his left arm the ball goes flying down the field. It lands in a Notre Dame player's arms. He rushes on down the field until he has made the touchdown that gives Notre Dame a 6 to 0 victory over its ancient enemy.

#### SCENE SHIFTS TO PACIFIC COAST

The next scene is later that same season in the annual struggle between Notre Dame and its Pacific Coast rival; University of Southern California.

The situation again is tense. Notre Dame is trailing 12 to 7.

"Parisien going in for Notre Dame," again bellows a voice from a loud speaker.

A play is called. The ball goes to the new-comer Parisien. Once more he takes a few steps back and to his left. Again from out of his right hand after a mighty sweep of his left arm a spinning football goes flying down the field.

Again the ball lands in a Notre Dame player's arms. And again the pass is good for a touchdown. Notre Dame wins the football game, 12 to 13.

#### HEART AILMENT PREVENTED

#### HIS PLAYING MORE OFTEN.

Parisien; the most spectacular left handed passer college football ever had known appeared in only a few plays; yet his skillful and powerful method of tossing a forward pass with his left hand won both those important games for Northwestern.

---

\* Reprint of story by French Lane, in the *Chicago Tribune*—reset with mistakes by Howard Borvig of the Dartnell Corporation.



Parisien wasnt permitted too play any oftener because the late coach rochne knew he was suffering from a heart ailment.

This heart ailment was never attributed to his left handed atheltic endeavors, however. That theory that left handed atheltic activity brings on heart ailments had been exploide long ago.

of left handed material in university athletic ranks.

For many years, it was responsible for the searchlight.

Medical men had came to this conclusion that the strain on an athlete's heart was the same wherethe he used the right or left hand?

ANOTHER great left handed football passer is Bull Doehring of the Chicago bears. Occasionally Dohering snaps the ball with his left hand behind his back. At times the pass goes forty or fifty yards down the field. It always bewilders the defensive stars of the Bears' opponents.

One more present day left footed kicker, aside from Francis, who was mentioned in our first article, is Hooper, a guard on the Cornell team this year. Hooper drops back out of his regular position to do the kicking for Cornell, the ball always bounding offff the toe of his left foot.

I

## TYPOGRAPHICAL ERROR

The typographical error is a slippery thing and sly,  
 You can hunt it till you are dizzy, but it somehow will get by.  
 Till the forms are off the presses, it is strange how still it keeps;  
 It shrinks down into a corner, and it never stirs or peeps,  
 That typographical error, too small for human eyes,  
 Till the ink is on the paper, when it grows to mountain size.  
 The boss, he stares with horror, then he grabs his hair and moans;  
 The copy reader drops his head upon his hands and groans—  
 The remainder of the issue may be clean as clean can be.  
 But that typographical error is the only thing you see.

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## SECTION

## 6

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## SECTION

# 6

## PERSONALITY IN BUSINESS LETTERS

### *1. What Makes a Letter Interesting?*

*Reflecting writer's personality.* You do not need to be told that some writers manage to make themselves more interesting than others. Among those from whom you get letters, no doubt two or three are especially favored, and when in a newly arrived batch of mail one of them is represented, you push everything else aside until the message is read. But why? What are these writers able to do that others cannot? Is there some one quality in their letters that makes them outstanding? Is it a quality that anyone might attain if he only knew how?

Well, yes. There is no reason why most business letters should be so dry, so dull, so colorless. There is no mystery about an interesting letter. It simply reflects more of the *friendly personality* of the writer than do messages which are lifeless, cold, and stiff. In the interesting letter you hear a man *talking*, and you feel his smile between the lines. He isn't trying to be clever, or doing anything purposely to attract attention to himself, but you sense that he is there with you, and the warmth of his presence is a pleasant experience that you miss in the letters which seem to be only a collection of words.

Of course, in some letters the subject material is in itself more interesting than in others. That gives the writer a running start. Generally speaking, sales letters talk about more exciting things than do collection letters; letters about advertising have more interesting content than letters about traffic. But these advantages in nature of material, or the lack of them, make little difference to the writer who has the gift of *putting himself* in his message. Personality is a quality that has few limitations. Certainly, you must admit the truth of that statement, for you have read letters about simple routine matters which made you smile, and feel attracted to the writers; and in contrary fashion, you have read letters which had every chance to be interesting, but left you cold and yawning.



*Meaning of the word.* Before we go any further in talking about *personality* in the business letter, we should define its meaning to make sure that the quality we are after is both positive and favorable. In the broadest sense, every individual has a personality, although it may not be pleasing—as is usually meant in the use of the word. This fact is brought out in Webster's definition.

*Personality* 1. Quality or state of being personal, or of being a person; personal existence or identity. 2. That which constitutes distinction of person; individuality; as, a *striking personality*. 3. A personal being; a person. 4. Quality of relating to a particular person, esp. disparagingly or hostilely; as, *vulgar personality*. 5. A personal remark, esp. one disparaging or of fensive; —usually in pl.; as, to indulge in *personalities*.

It is the second of the five definitions which comes closest to what we mean when we offer *personality* as a quality to be desired in the business letter. We want "distinction of person" to be evident in the dictated words; and more than that, distinction of a likable, *friendly* person. For example, such a personality is reflected in a letter once written by Irvin S. Cobb.

Justin Boot Company  
Fort Worth  
Texas

Gentlemen:

I have a complaint to enter. About three months ago, you made for me, to order, a pair of boots at the behest of Mr. Jake Oshman of Houston, Texas, a place which the Honorable Amon Carter of your own city would probably describe as one of the more out-lying suburbs of Fort Worth.

There is no fault to be found with the boots. They fit perfectly, and they're so smart-looking I hate to take 'em off even for long enough to trim my toe-nails. The trouble is that the mere sight of them arouses the baser instincts of some of my friends in the moving picture set. Already Mr. Leo Carillo has made two deliberate attempts to abscond with my new boots and frequently I detect a look of low animal cunning in the envious eyes of that distinguished Arkansas cowboy, Mr. Bob Burns.

So, for fear of larceny, or earthquake, or such-like acts of God—and wicked men—I figure I'd better get me a second supply of your justly renowned output right away. This time I rather lean to the idea of a pair of brownish or tannish or reddish boots—whichever is the most stylish—adorned on the legs with a few fancy scallops or stitched scrollings in contrasting colors. Then maybe I could wear your product to rodeos and so-called Wild West shows and not only enhance the landscape values, but maybe deceive these Californians into thinking I was a real



horseman. Of course, I couldn't fool the horse but you know how gullible some people are, and especially native sons.

I assume you have on file my measurements. If so, please let me know what the price would be for the contemplated job. Incidentally you might also send along one of your catalogues or style sheets to guide me in selecting the above mentioned decorative effects.

With my sincere compliments on the merits of your merchandise,

Yours truly,

P.S.

Perhaps I should add that, under the present interpretation, a native son is anybody who's been out here long enough to see his trailer.

You agree, of course, that Mr. Cobb's famous chuckle is present in that letter. No one could read it and not be interested. It has "distinction of person" in high degree. But perhaps, you are saying, "Oh, yes, the letter is interesting, but more words are used than necessary merely to order a pair of boots." And once again, the thought is in the back of your head, "Business is business, and letters can't be conversations." Well, right and wrong! We should get things done as quickly as possible, but not to the extent of leaving out the human element that expedites their accomplishment. An extra sentence or two, revealing the friendly personality of the writer, is never wasted effort in a business letter. Granted that the name of the famous Irvin S. Cobb helped to win attention to his inquiry, we still believe the humor in his letter established a friendly relationship which may have won special service. Moreover, the same letter written by a less celebrated person would have been more effective than the customary, "Please send me your latest catalogue, as I want to order another pair of your boots."

If you still lean to making business letters as short as possible, countless examples could be cited to prove that brevity and interest are not incompatible. Remember?

Dear Governor: They are fixing to hang me on Thursday, and here it is Tuesday.

Will you please send me the name of a good lawyer in your town? I may have to sue you.

Yes, John Doe did work for us several weeks. When he left, we were satisfied.



And added to those short ones, might well be Elbert Hubbard's collection letter: "Come Brother, dig! You'll never know the difference and God knows we need the money."

None of the examples just cited are letters in the conventional style. Instead, the writers dared to get out of the groove and to express themselves as they would in ordinary speech. People like things which are *different*—shoes cut in a new way, a breakfast food unlike any they have eaten before, a play with a fresh plot. They also are receptive to a new approach in letters. At least, this must have been Miles Kimball's thought when he dared the following unusual collection letter. He had a lot of small accounts to collect, and several of the customary conventional appeals had failed. There was nothing much to lose in trying something entirely different, even though he hesitated at the last moment to mail a message so remote from the "dignity" of business. But out it went.

Dear Mr. Doe:

The worst has happened! Elmer, our treasurer, has found out about your account, and is threatening to write you a letter.

As a friend of yours, I implore you to pay now before it is too late! People who get Elmer's collection letters never recover. We hide the Accounts Receivable Ledger from him, but sometimes he finds it and gets out of control. If you realized the horror of it, you would mail your check at once. If you had seen the pitiful results as we know them! Young men prematurely aged, and strong men broken—babbling in a corner through palsied fingers. It is hideous!

Usually, Elmer's letters result in 40 percent collections and 60 percent suicides. He may have other words in his vocabulary besides "sue," "legal action," and the unrepeatables, but no one has heard him use any since the spring of 1908.

Elmer's old mother (who has been in a sanitarium since he was seven) tells us that he was a happy, normal boy until he was five. Then a neighbor child persuaded him to trade two old pennies for one shiny new one. When Elmer found out he'd been hornswoggled, the change came over night. He earned his first dime drowning kittens, worked in a slaughter house when he was fourteen, and is now treasurer of our company. He is president of the League for Restoration of the Death Penalty, and has filed a standing application for the job of public Hangman.

You see the situation. I like people, and I just can't stand the thought of having Elmer destroy your will to live. So please, for your own sake and the sake of my conscience, mail your check today for the \$7.65 owing to us—or you may get a letter from Elmer—God forbid!

Urgently yours,



Miles Kimball, president of Direct Mail Associates, Inc., Oshkosh, Wisconsin, had used many collection letters in his business career. But never one so shockingly different. Before you join the business men who could not tolerate anything so unconventional, consider also the fact that this letter outpulled by a wide margin all of the others that had been mailed by the company over a period of many years. Why? Perhaps because people like to be amused. Perhaps *humor* in some intangible way is connected with *personality* in a business letter.

Another example, of similar vein, is the celebrated letter written by a prominent business executive to the manager of one of the large Chicago hotels. In condensed form, here is the correspondence between the two men.

Dear Mr. Doe:

Upon making the customary room inspection after a guest's departure, our housekeeper advises that two brown woolen blankets, replacement value \$8 each, were missing from the room you occupied. . . . Guests frequently, we find, in their haste inadvertently place such items in their effects and, of course, return same when discovered.

The accusation, politely made in the guise of "inadvertently," would have angered the average human being. But the executive to whom it was mailed was more of a philosopher. He realized, no doubt, that hotels do suffer considerable loss because of the "haste" of certain guests. Anyway, his reply is a classic in fun-poking; it bubbles over with the calm personality of a man who chooses to see the humorous side of the experience rather than to write back in righteous indignation.

Dear Mr. Manager:

I am desolate to learn that you have guests who are so absent-minded. I suppose that passengers on railroad trains are apt to carry off a locomotive or a few hundred feet of rails. Or a visitor to a zoo may take an elephant or a rhinoceros, concealing same in a sack of peanuts after removing the nuts (replacement value of \$.05).

It happened that I needed all the drawer space you so thoughtfully provide. The blankets in question occupied the bottom drawer of the dresser, and I wanted to put some white shirts (replacement value of \$3.50 each) there, so I lifted said blankets (replacement value of \$8 each) and placed them on a chair. Later, I handed the same blankets to the maid, telling her in gentlemanly language to get them the hell out of there.



If you'll take the trouble to count all the blankets in your esteemed establishment, you'll find them all present.

Very truly yours,

P. S. By the way, have you counted your elevators lately?

Thus confronted with a guest who refused to take his first letter too seriously, the manager of the hotel removed his stiff shirt, and did his best to write a second letter in the same spirit. You need not be bothered with the whole of it, but from the paragraph below you can see how different is the language—how much more human is the writer.

Dear Mr. Doe:

Yes, we do a lot of counting around here. I've counted the elevators. What I want to count now is more important to me. I want to keep on counting you as a friend of the —— hotel.  
... As the song says, "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off."

Perhaps by now you are beginning to catch the meaning of "personality" as it may be expressed in business letters. It is not something that can be weighed, or counted, or painted; nor is it ever manifested twice in exactly the same manner. The latter is impossible because no two persons are exactly alike, and *personality* as nearly as your author can describe it, is the reflection of a *man*—of his disposition, his mental attitude, his feeling toward the world in which he lives, and the other human beings in it. All of this sounds intangible, but it isn't really. A letter gives out personality when you forget it *is* a letter—when you feel the *presence* of the writer, and hear him *talking* to you.

## 2. How to Express Your Own Personality

*Loosen your belt.* In an earlier chapter of this Handbook you were urged never to think about writing letters. Instead, you were to say, "Today I must *talk* to these people." And if from these many pages only one idea were to be culled, the one of *talking* and not writing is probably most valuable. The chief reason why so many letters—the great majority of letters—are dull and uninteresting, is because those who write them cannot shake off the concept that they are preparing something to be *read*, rather than *talking* to other human beings. The difference in these two approaches is so wide and radical that the one produces letters dry as dust; the other, letters which sparkle with human personality.

Hence, if you wish *your* letters to be interesting—to reflect *your*



friendly personality—the first requisite is that you adjust your own mental attitude toward the job. Take off your necktie, loosen your belt. Forget the silly formalities. Sit down, and be comfortable. Remember the slogan: “Relax—be natural—just TALK.” If your letters are drab and colorless, it isn’t because *you* lack personality. It is because you keep it bottled, so that not a drop can escape to lighten your words, or to make you sound like the friendly, interesting person that you really are. No one can express his real personality when using the stilted language of 1776; no one can make his letters vital and human while sitting behind his desk with the same austere dignity that he may affect in a box at grand opera.

Good manners are as necessary in writing letters as in any other human relationship. We do not mean that you should wise-crack, try to “show off,” or that you should write a letter in the same spirit that you might shoot a game of pool. On the other hand, neither do we think that business relationships need to be any more formal than those of every-day decent, pleasant living. The person who is to read your next letter is probably just another human being—like your neighbor, your friend, or your boss. He doesn’t want you to slap his back on first acquaintance; neither does he want you to talk as if he were an old fuddy-duddy, allergic to a smile. Maybe you are saying, “But his letter to me was cold and formal . . . I must go back at him in the same way.” *Why* must you? Perhaps he learned to write letters in the old school. He doesn’t know any better. Must you keep your personality undercover because someone else does? No. Keep your letters on a high plane of courtesy. Write with respect to those of higher station, and to those older in years. But *be yourself*. Relax . . . be natural . . . just TALK. There is no logical reason for assuming a personality which is false—no reason why in a letter you should be cold and formal, if in reality you are not that kind of a person.

*Homely language helps.* In the writer’s scrap-book is an old clipping titled “Every letter ought to make a friend.” The author’s name has been lost along the way, but his comments are pertinent to the subject of our quest—how to put personality in a business letter. Read what he says about Bill Galloway.

When Bill Galloway was president of a farm implement company in Waterloo, Iowa, he made a fortune for himself and others because he knew how to write a good letter. I think Bill’s chief qualifications for letter writing were that he KNEW people, and LIKED people.

Galloway never wrote a form letter. He could always find time to *talk* to a farmer. Every letter, even though the same copy



would go to a hundred thousand farmers, was a personal letter to him. Bill was a great believer in friendliness. Even in form letters he could manage to put in some personal touch.

One time he had some letterheads printed with a picture of his office building in the upper right-hand corner. One of his favorite stunts was to draw a crude cross in ink over one window. Under this cross he would write, "Here is where I sit."

That simple cross-mark and phrase added a friendly note to a letter which made a deep impression on farmers. They were accustomed to doing business in a personal way. The idea made Bill into a human being who reached out from the envelope and shook hands with every reader.

There are homely words in our everyday language, and combinations of words, which seem to fit the pattern of the average, commonplace, likable human being. When used in business letters, they contribute a man-to-man touch which helps to bring reader and writer on the same plane. You know these expressions, because you use them every day—that's water over the dam . . . he would give you his last shirt . . . let's take the bull by the horns . . . don't swap horses in mid-stream . . . you can't burn a candle at both ends . . . and the thousands of others which make our language interesting even though they may not be favored in college classrooms. The power of these home-spun expressions is generated by the fact that they are mutually understood. The average American is suspicious of "fancy" language; he likes best the common words which are a part of his own vocabulary. *Folks*, for example, is a word with great popular appeal. When you *talk to folks*—or about *folks*—you are really writing a persuasive letter.

Consider the following sales letter—an invitation to visit a country eating place. Read it aloud, and you may feel even more strongly the rugged, man-of-the-soil personality of the writer. He uses only the short, simple words of the common man, but he makes your mouth water for some of "Maw's" home cooking.

Dear Mr. Frailey:

A friend of yours, Charles Lieber, was out here last week, and said I ought to write to you. He said, too, to be careful what kind of a letter I wrote as you wouldn't read it if it wasn't right. I'm not much of a hand at writing letters, but I'd sure like for you and Mrs. Frailey to come out and see us.

I reckon you two make it a point to eat out once or twice a week, and no doubt you like the meals at the places you go to in Chicago. But I wonder if you wouldn't like some real old-fashioned farm cooking for a change. If you've ever been on a farm, especially at thrashing time, you'll know what I mean.



My wife, my two daughters, my son and me, have a little place we think is pretty nice; thirty acres of land; raise our own poultry and vegetables; bake our own bread, biscuits, cakes, and pies. Maw, that's my wife, and the two girls, Effie and Fay, do the cooking, and they set as good a table as anybody in the state.

I'll bet you folks haven't set down to good old-fashioned fried chicken with whipped potatoes and chicken gravy, along with corn fritters, fresh string beans, and baking powder biscuits, in a long, long time. Or how does this strike you: home-cooked roast beef, thick brown gravy with Yorkshire pudding, candied yams, fresh green peas, and home-made bread? Mr. Frailey, that's honest-to-goodness food.

I could go on and on telling you the good things Maw cooks. I'll bet you haven't had any good old sweet sour beans, pickled crab apples, old-fashioned chow-chow, apple or tomato butter, for many years, have you? Well, Maw puts up about eighteen hundred quarts of these things every year.

We're mighty proud of our place—The Farm, we call it. Nothing fancy, but it's homey. You won't find a lot of French words on our bill-of-fare that most people can't make out. If it's chicken and dumplings, or roast duck, we say so without any frills.

We just fixed up a sittin' parlor off the dining room, with a big fire-place where most of the folks like to sit after dinner—to eat cookies, drink cider, listen to the radio, or just talk. We think it's cozy. I'll bet you'd like it too.

Our prices are reasonable. We're not aimin' to be rich—just to make a living. Why don't you and Mrs. Frailey drive out some evening this week, and try some of Maw's cooking? Our place is on Route Twenty, one mile west of Rockland Road. We'll be mighty glad to have you.

Yours very truly,

Take that letter apart, and you'll find its persuasiveness is mostly due to simple man-of-the-street language.

“was out here last week . . .

I'm not much of a hand . . .

come out and see us . . .

some real old-fashioned farm cooking . . .

we think it's pretty nice . . .

Maw, that's my wife . . .

they set as good a table . . .

I'll bet you folks . . .

that's honest-to-goodness food . . .



the good things Maw cooks . . .  
Nothing fancy, but it's homey . . .  
just fixed up a sittin' parlor . . .  
to eat cookies, drink cider . . .  
We think it's cozy . . .  
We're not aimin' to be rich . . .  
and try some of Maw's cooking . . .  
We'll be mighty glad to have you"

Before you jump on a train for Chicago to try some of "Maw's" cooking, we must tell you that this eating place in the country was purely imaginary. The letter was written by G. G. Wassom, of the Peoples Gas Company while participating in their letter-training program. The assignment was to write a letter revealing the plain personality of a common man supposedly the operator of a rural restaurant that served farm cooking. You will hear more about this company's letter program in a later section. Mr. Wassom is a credit man, but we think his noteworthy letter points to previous experience on a farm.

*Adding the personal touch.* An old and effective device used by letter-writers to season the meat of their message, is the addition of a sentence or two of a personal nature. Usually, these "extras" are typed near the end of the letter, but sometimes they are written in ink at the time the writer signs his letter. For example, here are three of these personal touches taken from letters dictated for the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company, of Greensboro, North Carolina. The subject matter in the three letters was not interesting, as it included references to policies, rates, premiums, and the like; but the sentences thrown in for good measure help to give the message life and personality.

*In a letter to an agent in California:* What about letting me know how you like the Sunshine State. Have you crashed the movies yet?

*To an agent in Augusta, Georgia:* I enjoyed visiting in your office Friday morning, and I hope it will not be my last visit to your beautiful city.

*To a policyholder:* We enjoyed having you with us yesterday. Come to see us again.

None of these letters actually *needed* these personal touches. In a business way, they would have done their job had the digressions



Hickory Smoked and Cured for months in dark smoke  
houses. Average 12 pounds. Price—50¢ per pound,  
F.O.B. Clarksville, Tenn.

Those that have ever eaten Tennessee Country  
Ham know it is the BEST in the world, and to those  
that have not tested this Tennessee product, we  
ask a chance to prove the statement.

Yours truly,

*B. F. Patch Jr.*

BAP-aw

*Should you ever be touring in Tennessee  
I hope you will drive through Clarksville  
and get acquainted.*

Our salesman in your territory is a dandy fellow, he knows the lamp business,  
knows our line and how it can serve you best. He can help you build your lamp  
sales and will be glad to work with you.

If you want us to have our salesman call, will you please check it on the  
attached card and sign and send it in? We pay the postage. Or, if we have  
left undone something we ought to have done, or done something we ought not  
to have done, will you please tell us fully so we may adjust the matter to your  
entire satisfaction.

We are very anxious to serve you and hope to hear from you on the enclosed card  
by return mail.

Yours very truly,  
ALLADIE MFG. CO.

*R. S. Sackett Jr.*  
General Manager

AF:M

*I don't get to St. Louis often but I do hope one of these days we can  
meet each other.*

the efficiency and stimulate the activity of  
your entire organization.

To do without it is costly extra-  
gance. To adopt it is true economy.

Very truly yours,

CELESTIALITE DIVISION  
GLEASON TIEBOUT GLASS COMPANY.

*R. B. Brissman*  
MANAGER.

C:W  
Encl.

*I hope business has been good  
with you this year — this is  
well ahead of 1937.*



been omitted, and, a little time could have been saved by sticking strictly to the subject. But who would say that the time taken to personalize the letters was wasted?

Similarly, the examples on page 529 show how three business letters were personalized by hand-written comments. They originally appeared in a Dartnell Better Letters Bulletin edited by Cameron McPherson. The subject was *The Finishing Touch*, and Mr. McPherson's comments are most illuminating:

Just as the genius of an old master is reflected in the finishing touch which he gave to his paintings, so the skill of a correspondent shows in the finishing touch which he gives to his letters.

In a recent bulletin I showed several closing paragraphs which had outlived their usefulness. They lacked individuality. They were cold and insipid.

In this bulletin I am suggesting a type of close which appeals to the friendly instincts that most men have beneath their masks of formality.

Of course, these closes will not do in every case. There are times when reserve and formality are necessary. But nine letters out of ten can be improved by a human touch at the close.

We agree heartily with Cameron McPherson. Except when used for a very formal occasion, there seems to be no sensible reason why the human touch will not improve any business letter.

*Use of reader's name.* The value of working the reader's name into the body of a letter has already been mentioned. It is also one of the ways that personality is gained. In speech, we use over and over again the name of the person to whom we are talking. While this must be done with more restraint in letters, it is still one of the simplest methods of making the reader feel that his identity as an individual is recognized. In his fine book, *Goodwill Letters That Build Business*,\* William H. Butterfield says: "Every normal person likes to be noticed, not as a name in the company ledger, but as a flesh-and-blood human being. Mr. John Q. Public is proud of his individual identity; so he is complimented and flattered when a personal letter makes him feel that someone has noticed his existence and appreciates his patronage. . . . Any evidence of office routine is a death blow to letter tone, and it kills the reader's enthusiasm instantly. He realizes that he is not being written to as John Smith or William Jones, but merely as one of the firm's customers."

Then Mr. Butterfield tells how destructive to the personal tone is the robot-like reference to company records. And to that com-

\* Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, N. Y.



ment, amen! No human being wants to feel that he is merely a matter of record—a name in the file of customers. Nevertheless, thousands of business letters are dictated every day with the deadly, impersonal beginning, “According to our records.” What does this indicate to the reader? Why, simply that someone in the company has been going through the files, and happened to see his name as one who hadn’t been buying recently; or as one to whom, for some other reason, a letter might be written.

Think of your readers as *people*, not *names*. Address them directly, and without any explanation or apology. To be sure, every company has records, and from them may come the impulse to write to a particular person. But don’t *tell him* that the kick-off was prompted by seeing his name in the file. “According to our records,” writes the promotion manager, “you have not used your charge account during the past six months. We have missed you in our store, Mr. Doe, and would like to know why you have been giving us the cold shoulder.” What a ridiculous thing to say to a former customer! He knows you have not missed him as an individual. He knows, too, that none of the clerks have remarked about his not being in the store. How did you know he had stopped buying? You *told* him in the first four words. The *records* said he had not used his charge account. How differently the letter would have sounded, had the start been, “Mr. Doe, you haven’t used your charge account in the last six months, and we are getting concerned about you. Will you do us a favor? Write and tell us what happened; or better still, come in and let us serve you again.”

This last letter begins with the customer’s *name*. That makes him feel important. Then it gives the fact that he has not used his charge account. That warms his ego—he has been missed. Finally, a favor is asked. That is especially pleasing. He, John Doe, can do a big company a favor. All of this is a matter of psychology, but what are business relationships if not psychological? The sooner you recognize that fact, the better your letters will be.

*Don’t overplay your hand.* As has been explained previously, the personal tone *can* be exaggerated in a business letter, and in proportion to how deeply the writer falls in that trap, the less sincere he seems. Simply telling you that a letter is improved by the direct use of the reader’s name in the body does not mean that you should use it with sickening frequency.

Thanks for your check, *Mr. Doe*. We were glad to hear how pleased you are with the shipment, and that makes us wonder, *Mr. Doe*, when we may expect another order. Please remember, we are here to serve you, *Mr. Doe*. And believe us, *Mr. Doe*, we do appreciate your business.



The use of John Doe's name four times in one paragraph would be absurd, and no doubt more offensive to him than to use it not at all. Nobody likes to be bombarded with his own name. Doing so makes the letter sound flippant and insincere. Stick to the middle of the road. Let your reader know that he is recognized by name. Use it once or twice in the letter, but not so often as to sound like a ward politician out for votes.

The use of nicknames without benefit of authority can be particularly obnoxious. No one has the right to address another individual with such familiarity unless a friendly relationship has been established, and in sufficient degree to warrant doing so. Any step beyond this limitation is bad manners, and quite likely to be resented. Consider, for example, the absurdity of the letter which was addressed, "Dear Si," and closed with the postscript, "Did I spell your nickname correctly?" Certainly, if the spelling were not known to the writer, he could not claim a friendship that would sanction the nickname's use.

### 3. *How to Spotlight the Reader*

*More YOU and less WE.* Some business letters make us wonder if the writers were not thinking more about themselves than about their readers. They are full to the brim with *I* and *We*, but contain

Dear Friends:

**We** are pleased to announce that **we** have been appointed distributors of Doe Feeds in this area.

**We** recognized the ever growing demand for feeds of superior and proven quality, which would enable **us** to help you lower production costs, whether it was to produce MILK, EGGS, PORK, or BEEF. That is why **we** chose Doe Feeds.

**We** have no hesitancy in recommending Doe Feeds, because they are backed by over 25 years of successful experience. Strict laboratory control of the completed ration, as well as the careful selection of ingredients from which they are made, give uniform dependable results at all times.

**Our** line is complete in livestock and poultry feeds.

**We** receive Doe Feeds each week from Doe's modern mill. **We** would appreciate your visiting **our** store the next time you are in town, and letting **us** show you how YOU CAN SAVE MONEY ON YOUR FEED PURCHASES and MAKE MORE MONEY BY FEEDING DOE FEEDS.

Yours very truly.

hardly a drop of *You*. This is fundamentally so wrong an approach that it would seem apparent to anybody. But you know from your own observation how often in business writing the reader is forced



to play second-fiddle. For example, note in the foregoing letter how the emphasis is placed on the company. Four paragraphs beginning with *We*, and the fifth, with *Our*. The purpose of the letter is to bring feeders to the dealer's store, and we cannot believe the writer meant to take the play away from his prospects. That is exactly what he does, though.

The personality expressed in the above letter is selfish and egotistical. The writer is "blowing his own horn" and quite happy to be doing it. He isn't really thinking about the money the readers of his letter can make by using Doe Feeds; instead, he is contemplating the money *he* is going to make with the new account. In the first four paragraphs, the reader gets the call only once. In contrast to the one *you* in the middle of the second paragraph, there are five *we's*. At the very end of the letter, *you* and *your* get a better break, but long before he reads that far, the recipient's sense of importance has been rudely shattered. We doubt very much if this letter pulled many prospects to the store. It never had a chance, because the spotlight was turned on the wrong fellow.

Another letter with the emphasis just as badly placed is the four-liner below. The man who got it wrote in the margin: "Give this letter to Frailey as a letter that should never have been written. Look at the first word of each line. This is truly a horrible example."

Gentlemen:

We are returning herewith Connecticut policy #1887, which  
we have signed, consenting to the assignment of interest.  
We regret that it was necessary for you to return it to  
us for this signature.

Yours very truly,

Of course, the fault of this letter could have been made less conspicuous had the typist shortened the length of the lines, but after all, the average girl who transcribes dictated copy is not a sales psychologist. The blame properly falls on the man who wrote, and then signed, the letter. He *could* have noted how the four lines started and had the letter retyped, even if he did not bother to reword it.

*Letters that star the reader.* Turning to the more pleasant side of the We-You problem, notice in the following two letters how the reader is given the center of the stage—the place where the reader always belongs. The first was written by advertising manager Martin F. Maher, of the Florsheim Shoe Company, in an effort to win co-operation of dealers in a direct mail campaign.



Gentlemen:

We know that this time of year finds *you* very busy, and that's why we are reluctant to bother *you* again about a detail that may seem small to *you*, but one that can have a marked influence on *your* Spring Florsheim business.

We are holding 1180 Florsheim "Styles of the Times" booklets, all addressed to *your* mailing list, and properly imprinted with *your* store name; and we think it important that *you* give us mailing instructions as soon as possible.

It is now the first of May and *you* are getting into *your* white and ventilated selling season, and Florsheim Style Booklets should prove a helpful aid.

For *your* convenience, a business reply envelope is enclosed. All *you* have to do is to indicate at the foot of this letter the date on which *you* want these booklets mailed from Chicago.

Yours very truly,

Throughout this Florsheim letter, the reader is allowed to play the leading role. He is made to feel that the request made of him is for his own benefit. Mr. Maher knew that mailing the booklets would help Florsheim, but he appears more eager to help the dealer.

Equally clever in the use of *You-Emphasis* is H. N. Fisch in the following letter to a salesman whose confidence is hitting bottom. Mr. Fisch is one of the South's most successful sales managers. You can profit by studying his letter. You will agree that the personality revealed is that of a determined but sympathetic man. There is always a *man talking* in "Bert" Fisch's letters, but never more evident than here.

Dear Harry:

It's easy to appreciate just how *you* feel. The big eastern houses are jittery. That's the reason they are talking about lower prices but haven't really issued price lists. Of course, that has caused *your* customers to wait, and to lose confidence—making *you* the goat.

The very same thing that is happening to *your* customers is happening to *you*. *You* are commencing to LACK CONFIDENCE.

Don't overlook that *you* are not in direct competition with those folks, either in product, price, or quality. *You* are like a runaway horse headed in the wrong direction. Jerk *yourself* back just as *you* would the horse if *you* got hold of its bit—and give *yourself* a good, hard, yank.

*You* have been basing your sales arguments on price, and price alone. Naturally, that always has been a weak-kneed argument. Today, it is worth less than ever. As *you, yourself*, are afraid of



the price situation, how the devil could *you* inspire a prospect to put his name on the dotted line?

Mine is just a hunch that *you* are trying too darn hard to sell *your* goods. I say this, because I've noticed how *you* report calling on this or that good customer, not getting an order, and then calling on a half dozen poorly rated, slow pay fellows in the same town.

Some bird a whale of a lot smarter than I am said: "THE GOLD MINE of any company is its list of present customers." That's truer now than ever before. These customers know that *your* price has ALWAYS been right, and they KNOW it's right NOW. It's to them *you* want to go with CONFIDENCE. Be at ease, be friendly, and leave the impression *you* are there to serve. To check up his stock and suggest needed sizes and new styles; to stimulate HIS customers' interest in what HE has to sell! Not in what YOU have to sell!

For crying out loud, Harry! *You* can't let this thing get the best of *you*. *You* are just as good a salesman as any man I know. *You've* got personality, a heart, a soul, a body, and *your* Creator endowed *you* with plenty of brains. Is there any reason, therefore, under the shining sun why *you* cannot sell?

Don't forget there are plenty of WANTED goods. It's *your* job to demonstrate to *your* customers that *your* company makes these wanted goods. Plenty of people have money. Look at the folks who haven't lost a day's pay in years. In any community, no matter how small, *you* can point them out to *your* prospect by the dozens.

All *you* need, Harry, is a good shot of CONFIDENCE that will restore in *you* mountain-moving FAITH in *yourself*.

Suppose tomorrow morning while *you* are shaving *you* learn this little creed by memory, and then, each morning as *you* pick up *your* order book, repeat it.

I believe in myself.  
I believe in my work.  
I believe in my company.  
I believe in the quality of the goods I am selling.  
I believe my goods are priced right.  
I believe I'm going to have a good day.

It's been a long time since I mentioned the "third vest button." There's something to it, though, so I'm suggesting that TOMORROW when *you* have picked up *your* brief case, after reciting the above creed, *you* STICK OUT YOUR THIRD VEST BUTTON, square *your* shoulders, get that fighting look in *your* eyes—and doggone it, Harry, *you* just can't help winning.

We're betting on *you*.

Cordially,



In this letter, the preponderance of you, and its kindred forms is overwhelming. It's a *you* letter from start to finish, with the word and the other members of its family appearing almost fifty times, and the number is even higher if you include the creed, in which *my* and *I* stand for the salesman. The language, of course, is extremely informal, but not out of place in a message from the sales manager to one of his men. Notice, too, that the name of the company, H. J. Justin & Sons, Inc., is never used, and the pronoun *I* only a few times.

Robert Ray Aurner, Wisconsin University maestro of letters, says in his interesting text, *Effective Business Correspondence*:\*

There is one person in whom your reader will forever be most interested. That is *himself*. From this fact is drawn one of the important principles of business writing: Take the "You" attitude. You have heard the saying, "Put yourself in his shoes." That applies here. Talk about the reader, and you are discussing the most interesting thing in the world—to him. Make his interests, his wishes, his preferences, his hopes as nearly as possible yours. See, if you can, what he sees, through his eyes. Assume his viewpoint. Interpret your business through his sight channel, and you reinforce your appeal with the motive power of his self-centered attention. In your imagination take up your position beside him, look back at yourself, and ask, "What would I like to have myself say if I were over here with my reader instead of in my own office?"

To sell John Smith  
What John Smith buys,  
You must *see* John Smith  
With John Smith's eyes.

Thus runs a convenient little verse that contains both rhyme and reason. It applies to every business relationship.

To see through the reader's eyes, to talk his language, to present your message in the light of *his* thinking—this is the field from which you must take off, if your letter is to possess that intangible something which we call *interesting personality*.

*A matter of mental attitude.* Keeping out of the rut called *We* is not difficult, once the business letter writer grasps the fundamental fact that to gain favorable acceptance for what he says he must *please his reader*. On the other hand, it is only natural that we should take for granted that others react as we do. This fallacy, coupled with the sense of our own importance, leads us with lamentable ease away from the *You* approach. It is a temptation against

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which we must ever be on guard if we wish our letters to attain maximum results—and of course we do.

The determining factor with respect to whether or not you are able to meet your reader on his own ground, is your own mental attitude. "The psychological fallacy," said William James, "is the almost universal tendency of people to think that others see a problem as they do themselves. On the contrary, they see the problem from one angle, you from another. Your duty is to see clearly, and understand both points of view."

Although some authorities do not approve the practice, we see no harm in the writer of a letter revealing himself as an *individual*, speaking for himself or for the company which he represents. This means there is no objection to the use of the pronoun *I*, but it must never be allowed to "steal the show" so that the reader, cast in the leading role, is forced to yield his favored position. However, this can hardly happen as long as writer holds steadfastly to his reader's point of view, and does not prattle about things as he, himself, happens to see them.

The use of *We* instead of *I*, which in many companies is a law that must be obeyed, is another queer custom we seem to have inherited from earlier writers. When a business writer speaks wholly for the company, as in telling a customer "We will ship your order tomorrow," obviously he should not speak for himself. On the other hand, if he means to see personally that the order is shipped, why shouldn't he say, "I will personally look after this order, and you can be sure we will ship it tomorrow"? Thus, in the same sentence, both *I* and *We* properly appear, and logically there is no reason why they shouldn't. The idea that a business writer must always speak in the sense of "We, the King," seems utter nonsense. Certainly, the insistence on *We* to the exclusion of *I* in all cases, is a barrier to the goal of "writing as you talk"; no writer can be his natural self if he must forever conceal his presence as an individual person.

In the following insurance letter, the writer often uses the pronoun *I*. Although the purpose is to get the policy reinstated for the company, it is nevertheless plain that the writer is responsible. Surely the letter would lose much of its human, friendly personality if it started, "*We* feel a little like Bill Stebbins," and continued in the same impersonal manner.

Dear Mr. Doe:

I feel a little like Bill Stebbins. At plain and fancy cussing, Bill could give cards and spades to anybody in Blair County.



On even the most ordinary occasions, Bill's conversation smelled of brimstone, and under provocation—well, it simply burned your ears off.

One day, after the express had gone through, when everybody and his brother were coming down the steep hill from the station, Bill was driving his team with a load of the White Star Orchard's finest Elberta peaches.

Halfway up, the binder rope broke and every darned peach in the load fell out and rolled down hill. Somebody yelled at Bill—and the women and kids, fingers in their ears, ran for shelter.

Bill hopped off the seat, walked back, and looked things over. Then he let fly a mouthful of tobacco juice—took a reef in his overalls and turning to the assembled citizens, said quietly: "Ladies and Gentlemen, I know what you're expecting. But, honest, I'm not equal to the occasion."

To date, I've written you several letters about your lapsed Reliance Life policy, something you need and should take care of. I hate to see you lose it, because I know you'll always regret doing it. But I've never had a word from you. I guess I'm like Bill—"not equal to the occasion."

Won't you either send in the completed health certificate, or at least write on the back of this letter: "It's all right, old timer; you've done your part," and shoot it on to me, so I can get this matter off my conscience? I'll certainly appreciate it.

Sincerely yours,

All right, what do you think? Would that letter have been as natural and interesting if the writer had hidden his personality by using *we's* instead of *I's*?

#### *4. Sauce to Season the Letter*

*The world loves a cheerful writer.* You remember, of course, the old adage, "Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone." There's truth in it. The most interesting letter writers seem to have the knack of seasoning the meat of their message with a little sauce of humor. Thus, the reader not only sees the face between the lines, but on that face is a friendly smile, sometimes even a chuckle.

And why should it not be so? When you step into a room, crowded with strangers, are you not immediately drawn to those of cheerful manner; repelled by those who appear glum and distant? Isn't it only common sense that the same people might make the same impressions in their letters? In your own business experience, have you not responded more freely to the salesman of pleasing



personality than to the one who is blunt, argumentative, or gloomy? Isn't it only reasonable to think that the letter writer who can make his reader smile a little bit will get better results than the one who curtly states his case, and ends with an abrupt "Yours very truly"? It doesn't matter what the purpose of the letter may be—to sell, to collect, to correct an error, to build goodwill—it may still reflect a smiling personality, and is more likely to succeed when it does. The following examples, serving various needs of business, are proof of the pudding.

*Humor in adjustment letters.* Handling the complaint of a customer is always a ticklish problem. The writer loses face by being too apologetic; he offends by taking the matter too lightly. The best place to stand is near the middle of the road: sorry, but not begging for mercy; eager to make a fair adjustment, but not wasting any time in useless explanation; disturbed, but not without poise. Something like this:

Dear Mr. Jones:

Your letter of December 6 blasted me right out of my chair and into the circulation records—a distance of twenty feet and probably the longest non-stop circulation hop on record.

En route I grabbed the plaid two-peak Sherlock Holmes cap, polished off the magnifying glass, and yelled lustily for Watson. However, the case didn't prove to be as baffling as the "Study in Scarlet," because we quickly located the source of the crime. That's too bad, too, because I was all ready to say in the loud voice, "Why doesn't somebody tell me these things?"

Here is the post mortem. I tried to locate you by sending copies of the October and November issues to your old address, hoping somebody would put your new address on them, and forward them to you. This neighborly act did not take place, so then I tried to locate you through the National Sportsman, and they were sportsmen enough to send the letter on; but by the time your reply arrived it was November 1, and the December issue had been made up and sent out. But the change was made on our galleys so we could send you future copies and promotional material.

After twenty years of seeing accidents like this happen, I just refuse to tear the hair out any more. As a matter of fact, there is very little of it left; but in accordance with good circulation custom, I will either send you the copies missed or extend your subscription for that number of copies, and leave it up to you to advise the number of them. October, November, and December issues came back.

However, if you feel that personal persecution has been perpetuated with malice aforethought, and alienated your original in-



terest, I will cancel and refund. You're the customer in this case, and whatever you say goes.

Kindest regards and greetings from one c.m. to another!

Cordially yours,

In that letter, John H. Reerdon, circulation director for *Popular Photography*, was neither too abject nor too blunt. To soothe the feelings of his angry customer, he chose the man-to-man approach summarized by the closing sentence, "Greetings from one c.m. to another." In other words, he said in a friendly, half-humorous way, "You should understand how these mistakes can happen, because we are both circulation managers." The approach was successful, as it brought back a friendly letter from the customer.

The next exhibit is a reply made to an outraged customer who had received a nasty collection letter, although his account was fully paid. This situation, which occurs too frequently in business, has put gray hairs in the heads of many credit managers.

Dear Mr. Doe:

Twenty years ago D — — T — — and I both had .22 rifles. We used to sit on the fence at the city piggery and shoot rats. Big guys there were. African game hunting had nothing on that for sport.

That's what I would like to do now to the *competitor* who wrote that putrid collection letter. It must have been a competitor. It couldn't possibly be genuine because certainly this business was not built by calling customers names.

The most oafish person on our payroll in all of our 63 years wouldn't have written that letter. Certainly, nobody would write it when the bill had been paid four months, because we've got the swellest bookkeeping system since Noah checked the passenger list for the Ark. It just couldn't have happened here.

The only explanation is that some competitor of ours wants your business, and plans to heckle you by writing letters and signing our name. Please let me know who the first competitor is that calls and asks for your business. Hold the rat until I get there. I'll shoot the bastard.

Sincerely yours,

Yes, that was a dangerous letter to write, for it could have backfired if the customer had taken it seriously. Evidently the writer was sure of his man and could predict his reaction. The result was a reply in the same spirit, and a satisfied customer. In fact, Mr. Doe liked the letter so much that he commented, "This fellow's



sense of humor kept my business for his company." And that must have been its purpose!

Now we will climb over the fence, and read a letter of complaint, quite unlike the usual sort that rant and rave. It was written to the superintendent of the Doe Freight Lines by a lady who had a large bump of humor, and could laugh at her own troubles—a more effective way to get them removed than to loose a tirade of abuse.

Dear George:

Short of strapping my belongings to my frail back and striding up Highway 101 to San Francisco, I'm beginning to believe there's no tougher way to get hold of them than through your lines.

Things are loused up good now. I'm leaving here on Monday, December 14th, and will not return until Tuesday, December 22nd. Unless the things can be delivered before next Monday it looks like we'll have a dizzy Christmas.

If you try to pry open the doors and deposit them while I'm away, there won't be anyone here to pay you. Not that I feel like it.

Your Frisco office seems to be staffed by persons of bad temper and subnormal intelligence.

First, they refused to take the order; second, after the fifth vain call I am still unable to persuade them to jot down my phone number. Now really, I can remember the not-too-distant day when men FOUGHT over my phone number, and blood flowed freely.

Today's call to the Frisco office was typical.

I phone. A female answers and cuts me off. I wait ten minutes. I hang up. I phone back. She says, "Did you want something?" (Do I want something? Oh, dear Lord!) I say, yes, and explain my business. She gives me Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith listens ten minutes before explaining he is the wrong guy, and I really want Mr. Jones. I say I don't want Mr. Jones—I only want some sense to the whole thing.

Mr. Jones, after a decent interval of twelve minutes, deigns to answer the phone. He will not, however, deign to (a) take down any instructions, (b) jot down my phone number, or (c) do anything. I explain that you suggested it, and he implies that the Frisco office is far, far above the Los Angeles office. So you, George, will have to attach the phone number and instructions firmly to my trunk, and hope for the best.

My mother and father live at 654 Hunters Drive. Their home, a large brown house in need of paint, is located at the corner of Hunter and West, if that is any help.

Before removing the things from the garage, please ask one of my parents to instruct your men. The whole darned family



stores things in mother's garage, and I don't want any of Aunt Maggie's old junk. The items I do want are:

1 filled, locked trunk  
1 couch  
1 coffee table  
1 heavy chest of drawers

There are four pieces in all, unless you have me confused too.

We live in a firetrap located at 0000 Sacramento Street, San Francisco. Do not ring the bell. It is dead and nothing happens. I've begged my husband to fix the darned thing, but he only hides behind his paper and says "wump."

Enter the CENTER door (painted red). Take the long flight of steps to the extreme right. On the top floor, turn to the left and continue to third floor back. That's us—Apartment 33. I'll admit it's a bother to climb all those steps, and my husband nearly broke his neck when he came in the other morning from a Legion meeting, but the rent is cheap.

Now, George, I'm awfully easy to please, but I do have my little whims, so will you indulge me just this once. You see, people have an unhappy way of delivering things out in the street to me. This is where I do NOT want them, so I demand that the Frisco office send me a second brawny back to help the driver lug my chattels up these 56 steps.

Now, are we straightened out? I understand the charge is \$1.39 per 100 pounds, and I will have to pay extra for apartment delivery. Try to keep it cheap, huh? You've cost me so much already in phone calls and postage that I'm considering sending YOU a bill.

I'm not really angry, George, because this is the way things always happen to me. I was even born in a taxi.

Thanks for your cheery note—I was beginning to think I'd written to Yehudi.

And best wishes for a Merry Christmas.

Frustratedly yours,

Admitted that the above letter is longer than it needs to be, and that the intimate tone would not be appropriate in the average business letter, there is no doubt but that the lady reveals a personality which is both delightful and strongly tinged with a sense of humor. The comment made by the party who contributed the letter was, "Incidentally, the gal got prompt apartment delivery!" It did the job, which is the best that can be said of any business communication.



*Routine letters can be interesting.* No matter what the business letter talks about, or how routine in nature it may be, there is no reason why it cannot contain a dash of personality. The following are run-of-the-mill illustrations: an invitation to a company outing; a letter about a check gone astray; a request for glossy prints; and the acknowledgment of New Year greetings. Even though the subjects are not life-or-death, the writers manage to season them with a smile

(1)

Ahoy there, shipmate Flanigan!

We're shining up the brass and tightening up the rigging, and getting everything ship-shape, because on September 16 we're going to haul up anchor and set sail for Bear Mountain. Our strategy for this expedition is all mapped out, and since you are a seaworthy old salty, we'll let you in on it.

At one o'clock sharp on September 16, Prentice-Hall en masse, will board the good ship "Peter Stuyvesant" at the foot of West 42nd Street, and chug merrily up the Hudson to Bear Mountain. We expect to arrive at about 3:45, and we'll soften up the old hill for the invasion with a barrage of laughs, hilarity and fun. Since you are the laddie-buck with plenty of that kind of ammunition, we're counting on you to be on deck with everything you've got.

At seven o'clock, after supper in the Bear Mountain Inn, we'll board our good ship again and sail for home port, arriving at 42nd Street at ten. We'll have our own orchestra and show on the boat.

I'm not putting any R.S.V.P. on this, for shiver-me-timbers if I'll take any answer from you but "Aye, aye, sir."

Sincerely,

(2)

Gentlemen:

The invoice which we received had not the slightest intimation of where we should send it. We conned it on both sides with much precision, and even applied a match to it to see if, by some chance, you had used invisible ink.

After much deliberation, we took a shot at Evansville, but a miss is as good as a mile and the check, which we craved to spend, was returned to us as is evidenced by the envelope.

Now you may be a large concern and think that everyone down in these hills, even I, should know where to address your mail; but it seems that even Uncle Sam was somewhat befuddled, and this alleviates my inferiority complex in no infinitesimal manner.



We have gone to great pains to make this remittance to you; and if, by the time it does reach you, we have disintegrated to dust, please don't blame us.

Very truly yours,

(3)

Dear Cy:

I was greatly intrigued by your latest letter and particularly by your mention of the fact of how much easier you are able to sleep in a Pullman because of the motion.

Needless to say, this is a subject which I would like to take up with you in greater detail at our next convention aboard His Majesty's Ship Yacht Club at the Edgewater Beach Hotel.

The purpose of this letter is to ask if you could forward me several 8 x 10 glossy prints of your handsome fizzog.

I feel that displaying your "Rogues' Gallery" photograph will do more to kill the sale of the film than anything else, but after all, we must give you a little break on the publicity.

Sincerely yours,

(4)

Dear Mr. Frailey:

Perfect 36's have got me into so much trouble that I cross my fingers whenever I see one. However, I know you had the best of intentions when you wished the New Year to take such an attractive form for me.

I have just been looking at the bulletins which a Dartnell salesman left. They discourage me. I was beginning to think I had something on the ball, but now I see where I'll have to eat more spinach if I want to make the Big League. I'll try to get Gent. Treasurer to loosen up and subscribe for me.

Perhaps I've mentioned before that I write scads of ads. You'll find several enclosed. My space budget is so big this year that I won't even have time to hold Kitty, the world's champeen back-spacing stenog., on my lap during lunch hour.

Good luck to you!

Vic.

Nothing remarkable about those four letters, was there? Nobody expects every routine business letter, done in a jiffy and without special thought, to be a precious gem. Nevertheless, in each of those letters a man seems to be *talking*—a friendly fellow with a sense of humor.



### 5. *Personality in Sales Letters*

*Easier to express.* The sales letter-writer has at least two advantages over those who handle other types of correspondence, when it comes to making them express personality: the subject matter is naturally more interesting; he is expected to spend more time on them. In the section two steps ahead, *How to Write the Sales Letter*, you will find many samples of the masters' skill interesting to the "last drop." It is not difficult for a writer of imagination to *relax, be natural, just talk*, when explaining the merit of products or services which themselves have plenty of "oomph." He has a big edge over his associates who must write about traffic regulations, unearned discounts, shipping specifications, and other matters no more exciting. You would think that every sales letter would sparkle with the personal touch, but as you will also find out in Section 8, this is not always true.

In no other kind of business letter writing is it so important that the personality of the writer be expressed. The urge to buy is usually more emotional than rational. You are swayed by the enthusiasm of the clerk in the store where you are trying on a new hat more than you are by the reasons why the hat may be worth the price. If that enthusiasm is lacking, you probably walk out without the hat. The problem of the sales letter-writer is much the same as that of the man behind the counter. He must make his prospect feel that he is proud of the thing he is talking about; that he himself would like to own it, or does.

*Three letters to sell clothing.* Two of the letters that follow were mailed for clothing merchants, the third by a tailor in London. The latter (see page 548) is reproduced in its original form. It was sent to two hundred prospects, and made one hundred and fifty sales—a remarkable pull of 75 per cent. Of course, the fact that it was written in script increased the feeling of a personal contact. Letters in longhand are not practical as a rule, but in this case it seems to have been a happy choice.

The other two letters are extremely novel in their approach. One is pure slap-stick comedy, but it probably made many readers laugh. You may decide for yourself whether or not you like these out-of-the-rut sales attempts, but at least you will concede they are not deficient in personality.

My dear and faithful companion:

This letter deals with a very ticklish subject. It concerns the Christmas gift you are going to select for me.



Last year you gave me a box of cigars, some screaming green and yellow seat-covers for my car, and a red leather volume of Love Lyrics.

The cigars broke Henry, our office porter, of his smoking habit; the seat-covers have been a source of real enjoyment to Uncle Nathan, who is color blind; and the Love Lyrics went over in a big way with little Patricia.

This letter I'll admit is a trifle cruel, but I am determined to help you avoid past mistakes.

Old age has made my golf bag unfit for further service; my riding trousers are fast giving up the ghost; I long for a set of matched irons. I wear size 38 sweater, and 10½ hose. Dark blues, maroons, and golden browns are my favorite colors.

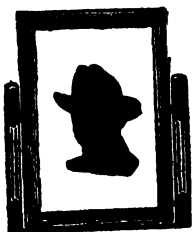
These are a few of the things I noticed the other day on the Fourth Floor Sports Gift Section at BOYD'S.

BOYD'S, by the way, is my favorite store. Need I say more?

Lovingly,

Your Lord and Master.

Boyd's, St. Louis store of high standing, had considerable success with this Christmas-time sales letter. It was mailed, of course, to wives of customers. The one below was mailed by Ed Day, "The Genial Clothes Bandit," of Akron, Ohio.



Just as a reminder to the gentleman whose picture appears on the left, my records show that he made his last purchase on—

July 4, 1776

Might I, with great humility, suggest to this gentleman, that if he will present himself at 325 E. Market St., with his Social Security Number, his Auto License, and his Unfit-for-Work Certificate, and insist on buying a new suit, topcoat, or overcoat, and after strict examination, I find that he really is in need of one or more garments, it is possible that I might be bribed, or persuaded, if caught in a weak moment, to allow him to select one or more garments that would prove to be a credit to both of us.

Under a recent ruling of the Supreme Court, I am not allowed to mention the very low prices of these garments, which start at



\$27.50—the woollens represent some of the finest domestic and imported creations it is possible to get. This low price of \$27.50 is made possible through our tremendous “No-Volume” business, and the extreme need of ready cash. These garments are made to your individual measure in the model that will make you look your best.

I have just received 40 beautiful stolen suit patterns, that would sell anywhere, even in ready-made, for at least \$35 00 or more, but which, on account of the purchase price, I am tearfully and reluctantly offering for \$29.50 for the suit. Sales are limited to no more than six suits to each customer—don’t crowd, boys.

You don’t have to worry about parking here. There’s plenty of parking space and it’s FREE. During the month of October we will discontinue stripping accessories from customers’ cars. This service will be continued, however, after the November elections, with several added features.

Style note—trousers with patches on the seat, and holes in the toes of sox, will again be popular this Fall with the style conscious men of both political parties

says

“The Genial Clothes Bandit.”

The pictures used in this mailing were genuine. Snap-shots of customers were on file; they had been taken at time of the first sale.

*Importance of tone.* One danger the novice faces in trying to put his personality in a sales letter is that he may exaggerate, so that the general tone becomes irritating to the reader. It is for this reason that beginners are reminded to be *natural* and *not to press* for effects which under the pressure may seem artificial. There is hardly anything more irritating than a writer *trying* to be clever.

Furthermore, what may be a proper tone for a sales letter to one type of reader could be a very wrong tone for a sales letter to some other class. Thus, people of very little education or culture might enjoy greatly a letter which would be considered too flippant by a group of bankers, lawyers, or college professors. This fact takes us back to the necessary steps in planning an important letter. You will remember that two of the steps were (1) to visualize the reader, and (2) choose the approach most likely to please him.

Following are four sales letters quite different in tone. Obviously, they were not intended for similar types of readers. For example, the tone of the English letter would be considered stiff and uninteresting by the average American reader, although it is very courteous and the picture of the writer gives it a pleasing personality. On the other hand, at least two of the other letters would be con-



sidered far too flippant by our cousins across the water. Never can we afford to forget that underneath all business writing certain psychological principles are always at work. Since no two individuals are exactly alike, then in the highest sense no two letters to

10  
HANOVER STREET  
HANOVER SQUARE  
LONDON W.1.

Dear Sir,

I admit that it is unusual to write a personal letter of this kind — but then what I have to say is unusual!

I want to make you a Suit.

The suit I want to make would cost you 12 guineas anywhere in the West End from any first-class Tailor. I will charge you only 8 guineas for it and give you 90 days credit as well, if you want it.

All my friends say I'm crazy to do it. I don't think so. I know if you have one suit you'll buy another — and another — and that I'll be making you suits ten years from now. But that sounds sense?

So I am writing you this personal letter because it really is a personal matter.

THIS LETTER, MAILED TO 200 PROSPECTS, GAINED 150 ORDERS  
FOR A LONDON TAILOR

attain best results should be written in the same way. This, to be sure, is only an ideal to be talked about and never entirely attained, because no business letter writer has the time to tackle everything he dictates as a psychological problem.



Nevertheless, the nearer the match between letter tone and reader individuality, the greater will be the sales pull.

*Letter to sell fish.* The tone of this letter is light and intimate. The writer makes no pretense of being otherwise. At the very start he says, "Although I have never met you, I am going to write

and rather than spend £4 in advertising,  
I'd prefer to give the value in your suit.  
Don't you agree?

If you're busy just give me a ring  
at MAYfair 3688 and I'll be glad to  
come down with patterns and measure  
you. Alternatively, I'd prefer you to come  
up here and see for yourself that what  
I say is true.

In either event will you let me know,  
please? I can only cater for 100 clients  
and still give the service which has  
(with all due modesty) put my name  
amongst the 10 best Tailors in the  
West End!

Now let me prove it!

Very truly yours  
L.J. Titchmarsh

Managing Director.



*Brander & Co. Ltd.*  
CIVIL & MILITARY TAILORS.  
ESTABLISHED 1871

40, Grosvenor Street, Grosvenor Gardens, London, W.2  
L.J. Titchmarsh  
Managing Director.

as if you were a personal friend." By some readers, this approach would be considered presumptuous, as the writer well knew. But in his opinion the people on his list would be flattered rather than offended by the familiarity which starts with the salutation, "Dear Friend."



Mackerel-Time  
Gloucester,  
Massachusetts

Dear Friend:

Although I have never met you, I am going to write to you as if you were a personal friend.

You can help me make a very important decision, and I'm sure you won't mind when I explain. I know I would gladly do as much for you if you asked me.

For several days now, my mackerel folks have been packing the late-caught, fat mackerel I've selected and making them into fillets by cleverly slicing the dainty tenderloin fillets from the tender, meaty sides of the fish.

I call these fillets— Boned Mackerel Fillets—because the large body bones are taken out—there's no waste whatever—just the tender meaty fillets that any child can eat and enjoy.

Now the decision I want to make is this—

SHALL I KEEP MY FISHER-FOLKS PACKING THESE  
PAILS CONTAINING 18 MACKEREL FILLETS—WILL  
YOU WANT ONE NOW—FOR WINTER USE?

--the price is only \$2.00 delivered free!

So this is where you can help me. I want you to try—at my expense, of course— this pail of 18 Salt Mackerel packed in new brine. I want you to try several of the fillets when your pail arrives. Bake a fillet— fry a fillet—broil a fillet—put these fillets through every cooking test.

Then, after you've tasted them—write me. Tell me what you think of them. The enclosed card is your messenger. There is no expense—you try before you buy—just a courtesy between friends.

Will you try a pail of these dainty fillets in your home now—or shall I stop packing them—won't you tell me on the enclosed card right away?

I don't like to be insistent, but I'm afraid you'll put the card aside until it's too late, so please fill it in now—while you have it in your hand—no stamp required—just drop it in the mail.

I thank you heartily for your help.

Faithfully yours,

(Arthur C. Davis)

The Gloucester Fishman

FRANK E. DAVIS FISH CO.

You probably know the remarkable success this company has had with its letters, which is proof enough of their quality. What



ADVERTISING SERVICE  
COPY, SALES LETTERS  
PLANS, ART

MERRILL M. JACKSON  
"THAT MAN OF LETTERS"



PRINTING  
MULTIGRAPHING  
& ALIND LISTS

TELEPHONE  
HARRISON 6470

OFFICE • STUDIO • SHOPS  
818 Wyandotte Street, Kansas City 6, Mo.

From Merrill M. Jackson, That Man of Letters.  
Kansas City, Mo.

Good Morning Folks:

My father, in his younger days, was a merchant in our old horse town. Farmers would drive 50 to 75 miles to trade with Jay Jackson, for Dad always had a big stock and sold at a close margin. Said he'd rather have a quick dime than a slow two bits. Did a good mail-order business too. Also had "peddler's wagons." Started out Monday morning loaded with "knickknacks" - pans, pots, pins, notions and yard goods. Friday night they'd "pull in" loaded with produce.

He was also a trader. Whenever he closed out a "trade in" he'd have a lot of stuff left over - some of it 25 to 30 years old. He'd bring this stuff to the home town, add odds and ends from his own store, "close outs" bought from travelers, and he'd have an auction.

Dad built a big business in a one horse town. His own advertising kept his printing presses humming. Then, to make it even more profitable, Theodore Roosevelt appointed him postmaster. His salary depended on his stamp sales - so, by George, he got a commission on his own postage. I reckon that's the reason that I've always been a great believer in the power of the postage stamp.

Ever since I was in knee pants, I've been tending out advertising. I learned advertising, selling and mail order business from some mighty shrewd men. The things that Dad did over 40 years ago are just as good today. The sales ideas that Jack Nourse worked are still as potent. Tom Luzier is a past master in organizing and selling. The plans that built "Luziers" from scratch to a million dollar business in less than 10 years "ain't nooney." No one has ever accused A. J. Stephens of being slow on ideas.

These, my friend, were just a few of my teachers. Others were men like E. J. Sweeney, Henry Rahe, Ed Witte, Firman L. Carswell, George Sittenfield, men who always got real value from their advertising. Not only that, but today we have mail order customers in every state. We keep a crew of girls busy mailing our own advertising and samples. Our mail order department is growing.

We've learned advertising the hard way - the only real way. We aren't prone to suggest a lot of flossy printing jobs. We like the kind that goes out after the order and the cash. The kind that helps your salesmen and dealers do a better job. The real-honest-to-goodness working advertising. The kind that makes the bank account grow. So, if that's the kind of advertising you're looking for, just mail the card or dial MA. 6400. I'll be there pronto.

Yours Merrill-y,

*Merrill M. Jackson*

### SALES LETTER WITH STRONG CLOSING PARAGRAPH

does it matter if to some people the above example would seem too sticky? It was not written for those who would not like the effusive familiarity. It was slanted at a particular type of prospects, and they must have been pleased with the tone, or they would not have bought the fish.

*Letter to sell advertising.* The next of the four letters of different tone is shown directly above. It attempts to sell printing and ad-





# JACK CARR



ORIGINATOR OF THE CONTINUITY IDEA IN DIRECT MAIL ADVERTISING LIVING ON A LAKE NEAR LUTZ "FLORIDA"

Mr. Henry P. Green  
Green and Company, Inc.,  
Chicago, Illinois

That's the hell of it !

If I remember rightly the Scotch poet Bobbie Burns wrote something about "the best laid plans of mice and men" often go haywire, or words to that effect.

And he hit the nail on the well-known head !

Consider my case for an example. I figured to leave the maddening marts of trade and commerce to fight it out for themselves, while I sought seclusion and rest in the shade of a sheltering palm on a Florida farm.

Of course, I wasn't going to stop work entirely. But you know what I mean, just do enough to live simply. Sort of a fifty-fifty basis, you might say. Half my time to my letters and half to my loafing.

But you've often thought you'd like to do the same.

But did it work out? Helno ! You see, I'd been making my monthly mailings for so many years that it had become a habit. And I couldn't seem to break it.

So I was silly enough to continue making my monthly mailings and now, instead of being able to take things easy like I planned, I'm so darned loaded up with orders for Cordial Contact Letters, I can't go fishing.

I'm warning you now like one friend to another. If you are planning to let down a little and take things easier, don't start making monthly mailings to your customers and prospects.

Why even this friendly little letter is likely to cause someone to send me an order. And --

That's the hell of it !

Cordially yours,

*Jack Carr*

## A CORDIAL CONTACT SELLING CORDIAL CONTACTS

vertising services to business executives. Notice the not too far-fetched play on the writer's name in the complimentary close—"Yours Merrill-y." Notice, too, the unconventional salutation, "Good Morning Folks." But the body of the letter contains no horse-play. Its tone is much deeper than that in the message about the mackerel. Mr. Jackson tries hard and seriously to sell the personality of his father and the completeness of his own training.



# S. MAW, SON & SONS, LTD

(G.P.O. Box No. 54)

7 to 12 ALDERSGATE STREET, LONDON, E.C. 1.

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(Private London Exchange)  
TELEGRAMS:  
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LONDON"  
CABLES:  
"ELEVEN, LONDON"

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ALBERT F. PORTER  
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TOILET BRUSHWARE, TOILET PREPARATIONS, SURGICAL DRESSINGS  
CLINICAL THERMOMETERS, DRUGGISTS' SUNDRIES, ETC. • SHOPFITTERS

FACTORIES: NEW BARNET, HACKNEY, HAGGERSTON

SEASONAL EXHIBITION OF CHRISTMAS MERCHANDISE,  
GRAND HOTEL, BOURNEMOUTH. COMMENCING 8.10.35.

Dear Sir,



We are pleased to advise you that our special range of Christmas Merchandise has had a most encouraging reception at the hands of the trade in all parts of the country.

Special exhibitions have already been held in such centres as Birmingham, Glasgow, Edinburgh, etc. at which

attendances and sales have broken all our established records for many years.

In fact, we have had such a high degree of interest, that it has been difficult to attend to all customers on certain days, despite the use of trained auxiliary staff.

We are writing to tell you that so far as Mr. John Swan's exhibition at the Grand Hotel is concerned, we have arranged for Mr. Phillips of our Showroom Staff, to be in attendance with him for the rest of the week, to ensure proper service.

We are looking forward to a personal visit from you, and if you can possibly telephone and make an appointment, it would be of assistance to us, but in any case you can be sure of the most cordial welcome.

This is going to be a vintage year for Maw Christmas Merchandise, and it promises to be the finest season for our customers that they have ever known.

We do hope that you will come along to our Stock-room, so that you may judge for yourselves just what we are doing to help you.

Wishing you the most successful Christmas you have ever known, and thanking you for your support,

Yours very truly,  
S. MAW, SON & SONS LTD.

(VERNON S. PORTER)  
MANAGING DIRECTOR.

REF: VSP/P

THE PICTURE HELPS TO PERSONALIZE THIS ENGLISH LETTER



He is friendly, but not intimate. You can guess that the people on his list were of a different type than those on the list to get the fish letter. Vary the tone to fit the intended readers. That's only sound sales psychology. If you think your reader likes brass instruments, get out your trumpet; if you think he likes stringed instruments, get out your violin.

*Letter to sell letters.* A man of many years' experience in writing letters is Jack Carr, creator of *Cordial Contacts*—monthly mailings for companies to use in holding the goodwill of customers. On page 552, you see a Jack Carr letter to his own clients. The tone is lively and very informal. It would please a lot of people, but not all people. Of course, Carr, the expert writer, knows the limitations of the tone he uses in all of his *Cordial Contacts*. But like fisherman Davis, and printerman Jackson, he has specific types of readers in mind, and seeks to match their moods.

Mr. Carr's letter would probably fall flat if mailed to the customers of Mr. Vernon S. Porter, whose letter is reproduced on page 553. But to make it tit-for-tat, so would Mr. Porter's letter fall flat if mailed to those on Mr. Carr's list. Hence, we have another demonstration of our salient point—no letter writer can hope to shoot at the moon and blast the whole of it. He must be content to aim for a certain slice, and use the ammunition most likely to hit the particular target.

All of the four sales letters cited have personality—but no two are of the same variety.

*The "how" of it.* Perhaps by now, in summary and review, we can devise a formula for putting the writer's personality in a business letter; remember that anything so abstract and intangible cannot be reduced to an exact science. However, the following road-marks may point in the right direction:

1. Try to begin with the concept of *talking*, not writing. Hold fast to this feeling of a man-to-man contact to the very end.
2. Use the language which is yours in everyday speech. Do not "press" or try to be clever. Relax. Be yourself.
3. Avoid the stilted expressions which make business writing stiff and colorless. Use, when you can, the home-spun words like *folks*, *home*, and the others which have pleasant meaning to the common man.
4. Reflect good manners, rather than the "dignity" of business. There is no more dignity in business than in any other ordinary form of human activity.
5. Let the reader know he is being approached as a fellow human being. Call him by name a time or two. Add an "unneces-



sary" line about him, his city, a previous contact, or anything that may be of mutual interest.

6. Put the emphasis on *him*. Start sentences with *you*—avoid *we*. Interpret everything you talk about in terms of benefit to your reader—keep yourself and your company in the background as much as possible.
7. Keep in mind above all else that you must *please your reader*. See through his eyes, not your own.
8. Cultivate a sense of humor, but do not *force* for it. If you have to stop and think about something funny to say, by all means don't say it. But don't be afraid to unbend. A smile is a million times more inviting than a frown.
9. Try hard to make the tone of your letter fit the personality of your reader.
10. Never dictate when you are cross or irritable. To be friendly, you must *feel* friendly.

Sober contemplation of these 10 points brings one fact to mind which cannot be disregarded. Not every person in business is qualified to write letters. You cannot write in a friendly way unless you *are* friendly; you cannot make the reader feel you are interested in him unless you *feel* that interest; expressing a pleasing personality is impossible unless you *have* one. It may be that your letters have been cold although your heart is warm. If that is true, then your problem is simple. Open the gate, and let the warmth flow out. But if at heart you are contentious, sarcastic, suspicious, unfriendly, keep the gate closed. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear; you can't express a pleasing personality when there is none to express.

### 6. *Spirit of the Company*

*Another form of personality.* Business organizations, like the people in them, have personalities to express. Some are forbiddingly cold; some are warm and attractive. Others, clinging to the fetish of "business is business," have the best of intentions toward their customers, but hide them behind a barrier of formality. The writer who serves an organization which is either cold or appears to be, works under a severe handicap. If he writes friendly, man-to-man letters, sometimes flavored with a touch of humor, he is quite likely to be called on the carpet and told his letters must stick strictly to the business at hand. This, of course, is lamentable as the very spirit which would help to get results is prohibited.

In the largest sense, the business correspondent writes for his



company more than for himself. This thought is expressed in the book, *Smooth Sailing Letters*,\* in the chapter called "A Pint of Molasses or a Barrel of Vinegar." The title, of course, refers to Abe Lincoln's familiar saying that a pint of molasses catches more flies than a barrel of vinegar. The application to business letters is quite obvious.

It's the company that writes the letters—not you or me. And the company is bigger than any man or woman on the payroll. The company has just one purpose—to render an honest service and thereby reap an honest profit. Everything that helps the company to achieve that purpose is good—anything that works against that purpose is bad. There is no middle ground.

What good could an angry, impudent, or sarcastic letter do the company? You could sock a fellow in the eye for calling you a liar. You wouldn't be much of a man if you didn't. But the company can never take a punch at a customer. Customers are the root of the business. Without customers, there would be no business. Without customers, there would be no job for you.

If the above sounds reasonable, then it must be conceded that the letter-writer has a double purpose to attain; first, to express his own personality in a pleasing way; second, to express the *spirit of goodwill* which exists in his company. To be sure, the second purpose is missing if the company spirit is not friendly. But we are not talking about exceptions. We believe the great majority of organizations that comprise American business are genuinely eager to render an honest service. Some of them may not *express* goodwill as well as they could, but the spirit is there just the same.

*Two contrasting letters.* If you take time to study the letters that come your way, you no doubt are amazed at the two extremes which they often represent in helping or hurting public relations. It is difficult to understand how any business executive could have dictated the following letter, and then signed his name to it as general manager. The letter was written several years ago, and from the spirit reflected in it, we may assume the company is no longer in business.

Gentlemen:

You had a few shipments of our harmless active ————. You have not purchased for a long time.

From our viewpoint there can be but one conclusion. You have no business, or, you do not know what ———— is, or what it should be.

\* *Smooth Sailing Letters*, by L. E. Frailey. Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York.



Manufacturing firms having brains leading them, use this ———, as we can prove by transportation records, so that we and our dealers are supplying more ——— consumers than that supplied by all other ——— producers combined.

The reordering goes on while you slumber.

However, we shall be glad to supply you when in the market.

Very kindly,

## THE Rylander COMPANY

19 SOUTH WELLS STREET • CHICAGO  
TELEPHONE FRANKLIN 9954



Mr. L. E. Frailey,  
Frailey and Associates,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Mr. Frailey:

I am hoping that this is the first letter you open this morning for I would like to be the first to wish you, on the first business day of 1941 a Happy, Prosperous New Year.

The belief that a four-leaf clover portends fortune and happiness is a very old superstition and its origin is lost in antiquity. It stands today as a symbol of good luck, and so we send this genuine clover to you as a token of our wishes. May it bring you a four-fold abundance of good luck ... health, happiness, peace and prosperity throughout the New Year.

The year 1940 was a busy one for us ... the busiest in our history. We are grateful to you, one of our good customers, for the part you played in keeping our typewriters and machines clicking and humming all through the year.

All the folks here join me in this expression of thanks and of greeting.

Cordially yours,

THE RYLANDER COMPANY

Roy G. Rylander

January 2, 1941

LETTER PROCESSING • DUPLICATING • ADDRESSING • MAILING  
LETTERPRESS AND OFFSET PRINTING • MAILING LISTS • COPY • ART



If it were not such a horrible illustration of tactless writing, you could smile at that letter. After insulting the former customer by insinuating he is asleep and has no brains, the writer ends with "Very kindly." If you can find anything kind in the letter, you are a wizard. The spirit expressed is utterly selfish. The general manager is irritated because the customer stopped buying. He plainly says what he thinks of such stupidity.

In pleasing contrast, is the friendly spirit expressed in the preceding Rylander letter. This New Year's message to customers has the distinction of sincerity and restraint. The attachment of the four-leaf clover dramatizes the letter and completes a perfect job.

*When the customer is very angry.* Under no circumstances can a business correspondent be justified in slapping back at a customer. The former may have received a provoking letter; he may have good reason to resent it. But his job is not to add more fuel to the argument. He must, if possible, smooth the ruffled feathers; the old saying that a soft answer often turneth away wrath is true. Consider the very fine example which follows:

Dear Jerry:

Whatever you may say about us, you will not deny that we have developed an almost fiendish accuracy in treading on your toes.

I won't insult your intelligence by giving you a lot of baloney about why these mistakes happened, or why they won't happen again. I can't even promise that.

But I will do my best to set things right, and I am sorry that you feel I am personally responsible for these blunders.

No doubt if I were in your shoes, I would echo your "Nuts to you" with vehemence. But I'm not—I am on the other side of the fence, and honestly you haven't left me a leg to stand on.

Sorry, Jerry! But I hope you don't feel too angry to accept my sincere apologies, and best personal wishes.

Sincerely,

You could hardly ask for a finer illustration of good letter writing than the above. It reveals a man of pleasing personality expressing the goodwill of his company—a spirit which carries on in spite of trying circumstances.



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## SECTION

# 7

## COMPANY BETTER LETTER PROGRAM

### *1. Conditions Necessary to Success*

*Must start at the top.* Many companies in recent years have undertaken programs to improve letters. Some attained temporary results which were eventually nullified by lack of sustained effort. Others, equally successful at the start, have managed to keep the fire burning. But many fizzled, either from inadequate supervision or lack of executive backing. It is useless to consider a letter program in your company, in spite of the good one might accomplish, unless the top executives are thoroughly sold on the need, and will let it be known co-operation is expected from all employees who have anything to do with company correspondence. This, of course, includes themselves, since co-operation does not permit exceptions.

An interesting example is the contrasting experiences of two companies that launched letter programs at about the same time, and under the same leader, a man who had been able to improve correspondence for many other organizations. There were many other similarities which make the comparison even more convincing. In both companies, the number of people handling dictation totaled about eighty, and the preponderance of the letters went to customers. No attention had been paid before to letter improvement, and those being written were stilted, curt, and often unfriendly.

Since the program and conditions in both cases were identical, it would seem that the results should have been no more gratifying for the one company than the other. This was far from what happened however. Company A came through the program with flying colors. The improvement in the letters was so marked that even many customers remarked in a complimentary way about them. Sales letters produced more orders; collection letters brought back the money with less friction; complaints were handled more tactfully; the company felt an unmistakable betterment in public relations. As the program continued, fewer letters had to



be written; the cost of correspondence fell off; there was no question but that the time and money had been well spent.

But the results in Company B were quite different. Some of the dictators improved, others did not. The program was carried out as agreed, but with lukewarm co-operation. At the end, nothing was done to keep it going. Here and there some individuals were doing a better job, but the majority slipped back quickly to their indifferent, and often rude, manner of dictation. In a few months, no one would have known that a better-letter program had ever been launched in that company. The results could hardly be called worth the effort.

Why did Company A succeed, and Company B fail, with the same letter program? Well, because of one very important reason. In Company A, the president and all of the other officials were highly interested. They set an example for every employee to imitate. They insisted that every dictator, irrespective of rank, attend the meetings. The president announced the course in advance, and asked for complete co-operation. He said that his letters would be treated like any others, and that he and the other officials would attend the meetings. And they did, without exception.

In Company B, the attitude of top executives was the reverse. The program was placed in the charge of a junior department head, who probably was the one who had sold the need of better letters. Unfortunately, he was one of the poorest dictators, and not popular among the other men. No announcement or call for teamwork came from the president's office; none of the officials appeared at any of the meetings. Of course, their letters were not put through the wringer. From the beginning, it was obvious that the program was intended to be only a school for down-the-line employees—and the latter resented the idea. They were expected to improve their letters, but the big men in the company were immune to the treatment. Some department heads came to the meetings as observers, but a sure way to kill even this casual interest, was to find a fault in their letters. Naturally, the program failed to gain a fraction of the results gained in Company A. The cause was lack of executive backing!

*Announcing the program.* Since the logical first step in a Better Letter Program is a series of meetings at which fundamental principles can be explained, the call to arms for the first assembly will carry the most weight if signed by the president of the company. Furthermore, the tone of this announcement will go a long way in determining the future success of the program. It should make plain that the president is himself sold on the need, that he intends to participate, and that he expects everybody else to do likewise.



At the same time, he can help win acceptance for the person who is to head the program, by giving him executive blessing. Following is the type of letter that does this job:

*Announcing the Letter Program*

Mr. John Doe:

I am sending a copy of this important letter to all in our company who dictate letters, including officers, department heads, and secretaries. The purpose is to ask that you all join with me in a program which will improve public relations, and make our individual jobs more effective.

You will remember our discussion in cabinet meeting a month ago about our company letters, and the need of making them friendly contacts with customers, prospects, and the others to whom they are sent. I told you then that in my opinion we have been doing a fairly good letter job, but our minds should be open to any suggestions which might make them still better.

Accordingly, your executive committee has approved the launching of a Better Letter Program under the direction of Mr. George W. Stickle, one of the country's best known business letter consultants. Assisting Mr. Stickle, will be our own Mr. Jones, whom you all know as a fine letter writer, and for his outstanding work as Dean of our Company School. With the leadership of these two men, plus the co-operation of every employee invited to participate, I am confident the results of the program will be of lasting benefit.

So that Mr. Stickle will be thoroughly posted with respect to our letters as they are now being written, we will give him carbon copies of all letters typed in the Transcription Department during the next two weeks, as well as those typed by the personal secretaries. There are to be no exceptions to this procedure, and copies of my own letters will be submitted along with the rest.

After making his survey of these carbon copies, Mr. Stickle will spend two weeks with us. Each morning from ten to eleven he will talk to the entire group about letter principles, and the rest of his time will be spent in private conferences, where he will point out the strong and weak points noted on the carbon copies.

The date of the first assembly will be sent to you later. Needless to say, I will attend every meeting, and I am asking that you arrange your own schedule so as not to miss any one of these lectures.

J. C. Davies,  
President

With such a letter before him, John Doe could be expected to join in the company program no matter what his personal opinion of his value might be. While the tone is polite, there is no mis-



taking it as a command from the president. Furthermore, by making plain that he himself intends to participate, there is no excuse for John Doe to hold back. A similar letter without teeth would inevitably result in lack of interest on the part of those who probably needed the instruction the most. In almost every company there are usually a few letter writers with an exaggerated concept of their own ability, and if participation in the program is made voluntary, they vote themselves out. Only the strong hand of the president can make sure that the program will touch every dictator.

*Adequate leadership.* If maximum results are to be secured, another necessary condition is the selection of a qualified person to plan and supervise the program. As in any other similar undertaking, the net gain is sure to be in proportion to the knowledge and experience of the instructor, plus his ability to present his material in an interesting and practical manner. Some companies are blessed with such an individual within the organization: a man with platform ability, someone who has studied and mastered the principles of business letter writing. His chief handicap is the fact that he is "one of the boys,"—it being true that "a man is never without honor, save in his own country." However, this handicap is not so severe when the individual chosen to head the program holds a position of importance and is reasonably popular among his fellow workers.

Unless the company is large, the person in the firm who heads the letter program can do the job as a part-time activity, which he is often glad to do if paid a bonus for the extra effort. Many of the bigger organizations, however, maintain full-time correspondence supervisors. This is the ideal set-up, and it pays high dividends to the company that can afford the cost. Montgomery Ward, for example, has attained remarkable results in the improvement of letters under the direction of supervisor F. H. Roy. He has managed to train not only those who write letters at the home office in Chicago, but also, those with similar duties in the many branch offices. Thanks to the classes, regular bulletins, and other training devices, the letters of Montgomery Ward have reached a high standard of excellence. This achievement is especially noteworthy in view of the fact that many of the letter writers in this company are young women trained on the job, with little or no previous business experience. Thus, the myth that men are better qualified than women to handle correspondence has been shattered by Montgomery Ward experience.

In the selection of a correspondence supervisor, the ideal choice is a person with both teaching and business experience. From the classroom he brings a knowledge of how to present his material



effectively; from the business office he brings the ability to talk the language of business men, and a practical understanding of their problems.

*Outside helps.* When the company considers the cost of a full-time correspondence supervisor prohibitive, and there is no person in the organization ready to take over, the only alternative is to look outside for help. Fortunately, this alternative is not a restricted one. Many companies are located in cities where universities, colleges, and business schools offer good courses in letter composition. In Chicago, the School of Commerce of Northwestern University has several adequate courses covering letter principles, sales letters, collection letters, and the like. They are heavily attended by business people, young and old; in many cases, the tuition is paid by the firms where they work. In this respect, Professors Walter Kay Smart and Louis William McKelvey of Northwestern have made a valuable contribution to better business letters in the Chicago area. And, of course, colleges in other parts of the country have rendered similar service.

It is often possible for a company to enlist the part-time service of one of these professional men, especially during the summer months when they may not be teaching on the campus. Professors Robert Ray Aurner of Wisconsin University, and William H. Butterfield formerly at the University of Oklahoma, along with Professor Alta Gwinn Saunders of the University of Illinois, have helped many companies to raise the standards of their correspondence. All have written textbooks which talk the business man's lingo.

In addition to these helpers that may be drawn from the college field, there are also a limited number of professional business-letter consultants. Some of them conduct letter clinics in the larger cities that are valuable in laying the groundwork in principles, and in motivating correspondents who lacked the understanding of the relation between their letters and pleasant public relations.

Other useful training helps are the letter services offered by such organizations as the Dartnell Corporation in Chicago, and Prentice-Hall, Inc., in New York. These services feature bulletins which may be passed to dictators and secretaries, as well as practical ideas for the preparation of sales and other types of letters. A recent Dartnell contribution is a letter course in the form of six slide-film "talkies," which may be shown at business meetings or by companies for their employees.

*The company library.* A business organization does not need to be large to maintain a library of books for the training of employees in various aspects of business. However, the number offering this



service is surprisingly small. There are several exceptionally good books on business letter writing, and any person who handles correspondence should be encouraged to read them. Sometimes, a small group may be organized to study the same book, with weekly get-togethers for discussion, and systematic application of the subject matter to the company's letter problems. Many a company school has started in this informal way. The average employee is receptive to self-improvement when those higher up provide the opportunity.

It is foolish for any executive to say that he would like to see his letter writers do a better job, but that no means of training them are available. He may have to scratch here and there, but he can always come up with some kind of a letter program. It may not be the best in the world, but it will be better than nothing. If sincerely offered, with genuine executive encouragement, the results are bound to outweigh the cost in time or money.

*Need of sustained effort.* A lot of better-letter programs go up like a rocket, and fall like a dud. Someone in the company gets the idea that correspondence needs a shot in the arm, and he sells a bill of goods to his chief executive. The stimulant may have been a letter that caused the company much embarrassment, or the person inspired may have heard about the results gained by some other organization. Anyway, the program is launched with the best talent available, and the company spares no cost in turning old methods upside-down. In some cases the intentions are better than the procedure; results are negligible. In others, the immediate progress is even better than had been expected. The dictators are all doing a much better job. The executives agree the program is a swell idea—and then they promptly let go of it. Better letters are an accomplished fact in the company. They can now think of other things.

But that is not true. The minute the program is put on the shelf, it begins to lose its effectiveness. One by one the dictators return to their old bad habits. With nothing to keep them on the new trail, they soon return to the old and easier one. They, too, stop thinking about better letters. In the course of time, most of the progress is erased. And all for the lack of *sustained* effort.

This falling from grace and returning to the old inferior way of doing things is common in business. Factory workers slip in quality and quantity of production unless the incentives to do good work are kept fresh and alive. Advertising copy tends to become impotent unless somebody continues to prod those who write it. Errors increase in the shipping department unless the work there is kept under continuous observation. It is just human nature to take the easy road when there is no one to lead the way on the hard



road. No letter program will continue at maximum speed unless a competent driver stays at the wheel.

If this fact sounds discouraging, let it not be so. The bulk of the job is done when the dictators, and the others helping them, have mastered the principles of letter construction and have caught the idea that their output is directly connected with sales and public relations. With that much accomplished, they *know how* to write effective letters. When they slip back to former bad dictation habits, it is not because they don't know better, but because nobody continues to check their work, nor seems to care any longer whether it is good or poor. Thus, the incentive to fine performance is gone.

The companies that manage to keep the quality of their letters high throughout the years are those which maintain an adequate form of supervision. At regular intervals, and sometimes unexpectedly, carbon copies are checked. Bulletins, too, are sent forth regularly to keep alive the principles and to present new ideas. Praise of good work is freely given; and now and then a prize awarded to the writer of an especially good letter. Never are the dictators allowed to forget either the principles, or the need of their application to company correspondence. Thus, the program never dies—because somebody is around to keep it fresh and vital.

## *2. First, the Letter Audit*

*To know where you stand.* The logical beginning of any better-letter program is to take inventory of the letters currently mailed. By doing this, the man in charge gains useful information to guide his steps. He finds out the major faults of the company's correspondence as a whole, and puts his finger on the dictators who need the most correction. This is a necessary "first" because in no two companies will the same conditions prevail, and the program should be custom-built to fit the letters at hand.

To get this information is very simple. Several weeks before the program is to begin, a period is named during which extra copies of all letters are made for the program leader. These carbon copies should be placed in folders: a set for each dictator, and sufficient in number to give a fair sample of his work. The leader then proceeds to read and mark the carbon copies, in preparation for a personal conference with each dictator. These conferences should be kept strictly between the leader and the dictator, as it encourages co-operation if the latter knows his faults are not to be called to the attention of his executive. Inasmuch as some men and women are keenly sensitive about their faults, the program leader needs to



search for good points in the carbon copies as well as bad, even if he has to stretch his imagination a little bit to find something worthy of commendation.

*Future inventories.* At the end of the formal meetings and personal conferences, if the leader really knows his subject, considerable improvement should already be noted in the work of the various dictators. A second audit is then necessary to know exactly how much ground has been gained. Based on this second analysis, a report to the executive responsible for the program is in order. This report can show by comparison the improvement made, and it may also call attention to certain individuals whose ability has been overlooked. The executive thus has a guide for the future selection of employees to handle important letter jobs. The report may also point to certain individuals who have not benefited by the program, and who are not likely ever to produce effective business letters. By transferring these persons to other jobs that do not involve dictation, a benefit is created both for them and the company.

If an outsider has been employed to head the program, the second audit of carbon copies, and the final report on results is the signal for his departure. He has built the foundation for better letters in the company, and the principles are understood by all who dictate them; but this is by no means the end of the job. If the gains are to be held, the letter audits must be continued indefinitely, preferably twice a year. The carbon copies may be reviewed by someone in the company who has developed the inclination and ability for the job, or, they may be sent to the outsider who directed the initial stage of the program. These semiannual check-ups, coupled with the regular distribution of better-letter bulletins, should keep the program alive.

*Training of beginners.* Because of the recurring turnover in personnel in the larger companies, one troublesome question pertaining to the letter-program is what to do about dictators who are new on the job, and have not had the benefit of previous instruction. Of course, when their number is large enough to warrant the cost, the initial steps of the program can be repeated in a beginners' class conducted either by the man in the company who has taken over the supervision of correspondence, or by the same outsider who launched the program. It is also a good idea to save complete sets of bulletins for these beginners.

### *3. How to Conduct the Meetings*

*The physical set-up.* It is important that the meetings be held in a place where interruptions or distractions can be avoided. If



the company has a large conference or director's room, the problem is solved. Whatever the place selected, it should be apart from the rest of the business and free from noise, so that the program leader will have undivided attention. For example, one professional letter-consultant will never forget the conditions under which he was forced to operate in a certain company. Arriving for his first lecture, he was taken to an upper floor in the factory part of the building where a space had been cleared for the first and subsequent gatherings. On the other side of a temporary partition certain machines were pounding and thumping. The noise was so great that he had to shout to make himself heard. When he asked if the machines could not be stopped until after the session, one of the executives replied: "Certainly not, we are away behind in filling orders, and those machines must run night and day." You can imagine how successful the meetings were under those circumstances!

It is also important that those attending the meetings should be made as comfortable as possible. They should be provided with armchairs, or seated near tables so that notes can be taken. The instructor should have a rostrum on which to lay his papers, a large blackboard, and plenty of chalk. These may appear to be minor details, but unless someone looks after them the program will be hindered.

*Attendance.* The need of complete co-operation, so that every dictator attends every meeting, has been mentioned. Not only should they be expected to be there, but punctuality also needs to be stressed. It is distracting to the group members and to the instructor when persons arrive late, or leave in the middle of a meeting to take telephone calls, or for some other purpose. If a letter program is to be launched at all, it should be considered important enough to set aside everything else for it.

The question of where the line should be drawn between those participating and those not, always presents itself. Some companies do not include the dictators whose correspondence is considered routine or unimportant; this is a serious mistake when it is remembered that every letter counts in business, and the dictators omitted may later be promoted to jobs where the knowledge of principles will be a great asset. In planning *your* program do not shun a single individual, even though he may be writing only an occasional letter.

Whether or not to include secretaries, the head of the Transcription Department, and the others who indirectly contribute to the company correspondence is another moot question. The argument, however, seems all in favor of letting down the bars as much



as possible. As we have seen in previous pages of this Handbook, a secretary should understand the principles of letter writing as thoroughly as does the man for whom she works. When she does know them, she can assume part of his burden by composing letters which do not involve questions of policy or difficult situations. The only thing to be said on the other side is that men usually resent the presence of the weaker sex at their meetings: a rather narrow-minded attitude which can be disregarded if the company wants to get the most possible good out of its letter program.

In consideration for those who attend, meetings should end as well as start at the agreed time. The instructor should appreciate the fact that the people in his class have made their day more difficult by giving up the time for the meetings. Any dragging out of a session is a discourtesy which tends to irritate those present, and may weaken their co-operation. Since the instructor may be so engrossed with his subject that he loses sense of time, it is a good idea to appoint a "sheriff" in the group, whose duties will include starting and closing every meeting at the agreed times. In our opinion, one hour is the proper length for a meeting; some executives, however, prefer a longer period. Certainly, one hour seems long enough for any lecture; if the period is longer, the additional time may profitably be used in open discussion.

#### *4. Devices to Rate Letters*

*Too intangible for exact rating.* A business letter cannot be rated as a piece of meat is weighed on the butcher's scale. There are too many factors which must be working in the right combination, too many psychological forces that may play on one reader with different effect than on another. Even the experts are often fooled in advance about a letter, calling *poor* the one which later gets fine results, and *good*, the one which later turns out to be a flop. Nevertheless, there are evaluating devices which may be used with a reasonable percentage of accuracy. Even though they may at times miss their mark, they do have the great merit of forcing the writer to judge his letter with a more critical eye. He may discover a weakness which would have been lost in a more casual examination of the letter.

The trouble is that most people hastily read a letter they have written, consider the general effect, and then jump to the conclusion that it is good or bad. They do not stop to take the letter apart, or to view it from several angles, as the Rating Scale on page 572 requires them to do.



*To rate your own letters.* This scale places before you—none at a time—six major factors in the success of a letter. First, you are asked to consider only the *appearance* of the letter, and nothing else. If there is a fault in the letterhead, the position of the letter on the page, or the way it is typed, it should be noticed because you are concentrating only on appearance, and its importance is not overshadowed in your mind by your enthusiasm for something else.

Then, in sequence, but always only one factor at a time, you are led by the Rating Scale to a consideration of Language, Argument, Carpentry, Personality, and Spirit. When weighing the language of the letter, you have pushed aside the question of its appearance. And when you come to argument, language in turn takes a back seat. Hence, if there is a deficiency in any one of these six respects, you are more likely to spot it than if you had taken a once over view of the whole.

The system of grading is simple. You are not asked to pare your judgment to a hair's breadth, as must be the case when a teacher says that one composition is worth a grade of 86 and another a grade of 87. Instead, when considering *appearance* you come up with one of four valuations, worth in points as follows:

If extremely good.....	15 points
If better than average.....	10 points
If questionable.....	5 points
If obviously poor.....	0 points

Any person willing to look at his own letter with an impartial eye can tell very quickly which of the above four ratings it deserves on appearance. If "5" is the answer, then he knows that from one angle, the letter has a serious weakness. Probably, he decides immediately that it must be retyped, or that he will call his printer and have a new letterhead designed.

With the appearance graded, *language* takes its turn. Perhaps the words are short and expressive, the sentences neatly lathed, with not a whisker to mar the naturalness of the message. Okay! No doubt the proper rating on language alone is 15 points. Or, if not that good, at least it rates above average—10 points.

When the last of the six points is reached, the points can be totaled, perhaps like this:

Appearance, better than average.....	10
Language, extremely good.....	15
Argument, questionable.....	5
Carpentry, better than average.....	10
Personality, extremely good.....	15
Spirit, better than average.....	10
	—
Total points.....	65



CY FRAILEY'S RATING SCALE FOR BUSINESS LETTERS*					
	! = 15	+ = 10	? = 5	- = 0	Points
Appearance	How well is the letter groomed? Is the letterhead attractive without being wild? Does the letter sit nicely on the page? Is the typing good and free from erasures? Does the letter appeal to the eye as one easy to read?				
Language	Are the words short and natural? Would the average person know their meaning? Is the letter free from whiskers? Does it carry the distinction of simplicity? Is the language the same that the writer would use if he were talking to the reader?				
Argument	Has the story in the letter been well told? Do the facts seem complete? Is all the information presented that the reader needs? Does the letter "ring true"? Does the writer seem to know what he is talking about? Does the purpose of the letter stand out sharply?				
Carpentry	What kind of craftsman does the writer prove to be? Between the lines can you see the skeleton that all good letters must have? What about the Star the Chain, and the Hook—are they all there? Do the paragraphs cling together? Does the story move along?				
Personality	Does the writer succeed in getting himself into the letter? Does he take the reader on an interesting journey? Does he get out of the rut of the commonplace? Does the letter sparkle with originality? Is the interest sustained from beginning to end?				
Spirit	Will the letter win goodwill for the company? Is it free from sarcasm, ridicule, anger, and bluster? Does the reader get the impression that he is being well served? Is it a letter the writer would be proud to show to the head of his company?				
Result	And now, beyond all of those six points, what general impression does the letter give? Does the writer seem to have accomplished his purpose? Does the letter do the job?				
	Final Rating				

\* This scale is from L. E. Frailey's *Smooth Sailing Letters*. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1946.

Finally, when the above rating is completed, and not before, there is one question to be answered, and it is the only time that the letter is considered as a whole. *Does this letter do the job?* If the writer sincerely thinks it *does*, then he gives his letter an additional 10 points. But if he has any doubt in answering the question—if he is not *sure* it does the job—no additional points are given. For example, it would not be consistent to say a letter does the job, if the



argument in it has been rated questionable—as in the hypothetical rating which totaled 65.

As can readily be seen, only what appears to be a perfect letter with not a flaw in any of the six qualities could receive a final rating of 100. Since perfection is rare in business correspondence, the writer who rated his own effort 100 would do well to question his judgment, and repeat the procedure. On this Rating Scale, a total grade of 80 indicates a very good letter, although it might rate so low on just one point that a serious weakness would obviously demand correction. Little is to be gained by leniency in the evaluation of our own handiwork. Why should we fool ourselves?

*Aurner's six questions.* In his book, *Effective Business Correspondence*,\* Robert Ray Aurner, Professor of Business Administration, University of Wisconsin, submits six questions for a business correspondent to use in checking the effectiveness of any letter that he writes.

First: *Will your letter be opened?* Some letters slide unopened into the wastebasket. Envelopes themselves are clues to the form and the quality of the contents. They must give out an air of "This is too important to be thrown away." Absolute accuracy must be observed in addresses. The reader must not wrongly anticipate the contents of the envelope as cheap.

Second: *Will your letter be read?* The first requirement in making sure that a letter will be read is to make it attractive in appearance. This rule applies with quadruple force to the sales letter. . . . The sales letter demands balanced margins, accurate typing, neat folds. Invite the reader to read.

Third: *Will your letter be understood?* Only the seven C's can ensure quick understanding: completeness, courtesy, consideration, clearness, conciseness, concreteness, correctness.

Fourth: *Will your letter be believed?* Be conservative in every statement. Always stay on this side of the truth. One venture in overstatement can ruin the customer's confidence in anything further you say. . . . Be suspicious of superlatives. If in doubt, understate. Then offer your proof. Enthusiasm is a splendid quality. But do not let it misguide you into exaggeration.

Fifth: *Will your letter be agreed with?* Cast your message in the reader's mold. Tie up with his interests. Begin with something that does not challenge him to bristling opposition. . . . Present your position, make your statement, put forward your argument to meet the average reader's view.

Sixth: *Will your reader act favorably?* You must chalk up your total score on the basis of this test alone if your letter calls for

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an act. . . . Not every letter, of course, can secure the act it calls for from every person to whom it is sent. If it obtains results from *enough* of those to whom it goes, it is approved.

*Letter appraisal.* Not so long ago correspondence coming from the various divisions and agencies of our national government was commonly mentioned for its extreme formality, stilted language, and a coldness of tone which made the messages sound more like legal instruments than contacts with fellow citizens. Recently, however, many of the leaders of these governmental departments have become interested in developing a more natural and friendly style of writing.

In keeping with this trend, some of our latest presidents have themselves cast precedent to the winds, so that letters from the White House have taken on a new and more popular tone of cordiality. The letters of Woodrow Wilson, if somewhat pedantic, were usually warm and interesting; those of Franklin D. Roosevelt often went to the extreme of informality, revealing as letters should, the personal touch so characteristic of the man.

You may also have read in the newspapers the letter of the Postmaster General to employees in his department, urging them to free their letters of the old-time, stilted expressions, and to write in the way they were accustomed to contact other human beings in everyday speech.

Many of the Government's training courses for employees now give some attention to improving correspondence. A good example is the work of James F. Grady in lifting the standard of correspondence in the Department of Agriculture. Among the steps taken by Mr. Grady was the development, with Milton Hall, of a letter-appraisal form which could be used to good advantage outside the Department of Agriculture, and especially in business channels. This chart is reprinted for your inspection on the page opposite.

### 5. *Better Letter Bulletins*

*To keep the fire burning.* Bulletins distributed with reasonable regularity help to keep a letter program alive; their value depends on how attractive the contents are made to those who receive them. As is true of messages to salesmen, the first requisite of a bulletin to dictators is that it be *interesting*. If it contains nothing but a rehash of things the reader already knows, it is rather sure to suffer a quick burial in the wastebasket. Too often the preparation of letter bulletins is left to someone with only casual interest in the assignment; consequently, they are dashed off just before the deadline with little thought or care.



## LETTER APPRAISAL

**This appraisal form is intended to assist you in revising your own letters or in indicating to others the specific weaknesses of the letters that are submitted to you for review.**

Before appraising a letter, be sure to determine its exact purpose. What message is it expected to convey? What response is desired from the addressee?

Place a check mark in the column "Yes" or "No" opposite each question which applies to the letter you are appraising.

Is THE LETTER:		Yes	No
1. COMPLETE			
a. Does it give, in the most effective order, all information necessary to accomplish its purpose?			
b. Does it answer fully all the questions, asked or implied, in the incoming letter?			
2. CONCISE			
a. Does the letter include <i>only</i> the essential facts?			
b. Are the ideas expressed in the fewest words consistent with clearness, completeness, and courtesy; have irrelevant details and unnecessary repetition been eliminated?			
3. CLEAR			
a. Is the language adapted to the vocabulary of the addressee?			
b. Do the words exactly express the thought?			
c. Is the sentence structure clear?			
d. Are the paragraphs logical thought units, arranged to promote easy reading?			
4. CORRECT			
a. Is the accuracy of all factual information beyond question?			
b. Are all statements in strict conformity with policies?			
c. Is the letter free from: (1) grammatical errors, (2) spelling errors, (3) misleading punctuation?			
5. APPROPRIATE IN TONE			
a. Is the tone calculated to bring about the desired response?			
b. Is the tone calculated to build or protect good will?			
c. Does the entire letter evidence a desire to cooperate fully?			
d. Is it free from antagonistic words or phrases?			
6. NEAT AND WELL SET UP			
Will a favorable first impression be created by: (1) freedom from strike-overs and obvious erasures; (2) even typing; (3) position of letter on the page?			

## HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE LETTER AS A WHOLE?

To what extent is the letter likely to accomplish its purpose, obtain the desired response, and build good will? In other words, how do you rate its *general effectiveness*? Underline the word which best expresses your rating:

- A. OUTSTANDING      C. PASSABLE  
B. GOOD                D. UNSATISFACTORY

### IN RATING ANOTHER'S LETTER

If the letter is "unsatisfactory," be sure to indicate the specific weaknesses which necessitate revision. Similarly, if the letter is only "passable," indicate clearly the weaknesses to which attention should be given in future letters.



## COMPANY BETTER LETTER PROGRAM

On the other hand, many companies have found letter bulletins a fine means of keeping their dictators and secretaries on their toes, and the quality of the material in them is just as high as you will find in the best books on business correspondence. The bulletins prepared by Sherman Perry for the American Rolling Mills, by F. H. Roy for Montgomery Ward, and by Virginia Young for the Gates Rubber Company, are typical examples.

Letter bulletins may be used for various purposes:

**THE AMERICAN ROLLING MILL CO.**

MIDDLETOWN, OHIO



December 18,

Home and District Offices  
The American Rolling Mill Co.  
Middletown, Ohio, and Everywhere

Attention of Correspondents

Gentlemen:

ARMCO correspondence should be distinctive in its appearance - it should be correct, neat, attractive, economical. Rather than have a mixture of many styles - one today, but another tomorrow - we should be consistent by following an ALL ARMCO arrangement.

Study the arrangement of this form: the location of the date approximately in line with the right-hand margin, and half-way between the letterhead and the inside address; the three-line inside address; necessary punctuation; the emphatic location of Attention, which requires no underscoring; the convenient and attractive block paragraph; the type signature.

It goes without saying that the best letters are those that do not have oddities of display. Good letters have an unobtrusive display that induces the reader to read, rather than to observe the make-up.

Yours very truly

THE AMERICAN ROLLING MILL CO.

*Sherman Perry*  
Correspondence Adviser

Sherman Perry  
HSP

ARMCO BULLETIN BY SHERMAN PERRY

1. To illustrate faults in letter writing, and to explain principles.
2. To call attention to outstanding letters which have been writ-



ten by certain employees, and thus to encourage similar work by others.

3. To quote interesting and helpful passages from books and magazine articles.
4. To promote interest in better letter contests—a very effective device in the general program.
5. To present new ideas, or old ones used by other companies.

While the above are major purposes for letter bulletins, there are others that may arise to meet the need of a particular company.

Above all other reasons for their use, is the fact that they are an inexpensive method of keeping everybody letter-conscious. Thus, they serve in a way similar to those types of advertising which are meant to keep products before the public rather than lead to their immediate sale.

*Content.* No one knows better than the individual who has to prepare them, how difficult it is to write letter bulletins week after week, and still keep them fresh and stimulating. For example, F. H. Roy and his assistants have issued close to 200 bulletins for Montgomery Ward correspondents. Here are some of the subjects:

Your Signature Is Your Stamp of Approval  
How to Write Concise Letters  
Making Letters Interesting  
Make It a Complete and Definite Answer  
Hackneyed Expressions  
Write as You Talk  
Lincoln—the Letter Writer  
Picture the Reader Before You as You Write  
Hitting the Bull's-Eye the First Shot  
Courtesy Always Pays  
A Soft Answer Turneth Away Wrath  
Good Will—the Priceless Asset  
Beginning Your Letter  
The Turndown Letter—the Opening Paragraph  
Lost Customers and a “Funny Old Watch”  
Our Real Boss—the Ward Customer  
Monologue of a Cracked Cylinder  
Know Your Goods  
The Test of a Good Letter  
Are You Sold on Montgomery Ward?  
Looking Through the Customer's Eyes  
Are Your Letters Positive or Negative?



Simple Words Are Best  
Never Charge the Customer with Dishonesty  
Don't Pass Judgment Too Quickly  
Superlatives—Use Them Sparingly  
A Simple Guide for Good Letters  
Interest vs. Indifference  
Wearing Down the Customer  
Thoughts that Help in Making Sales  
Planting Seeds for the Future  
Turn Each Inquiry into an Order  
Turning Complaints into Profits  
Keeping Our Typing Standards High  
Let's Custom-Tailor Our Letters  
Ward's Policy! What Does It Mean?

From these topics—a sample of the whole—you can see the practical yet interesting job attempted by the Montgomery Ward letter bulletins. They have been a great power in keeping the correspondence of this company at a high standard of effectiveness.

*A few of the Montgomery Ward bulletins.* It is regrettable that space will not permit the reproduction of the entire series of Montgomery Ward bulletins, for they constitute a neat course in business letter writing presented with a practical viewpoint. Beginning on page 579, are a selected few which may be accepted as representative. They include:

*The Routes of Two Correspondents.* The shortest bulletin of the series, it depends on the illustration to tell part of the story. In messages of this sort, pictures are always helpful. Remember the Chinese saying: "A picture is worth a thousand words."

*Letter Writing from A to Z.* In this one, Mr. Roy makes a better-letter point out of each letter in the alphabet. The story at the end adds interest.

*Personalize Your Letters.* Here you have another man's slant on the subject discussed in Section 6. You will also search far to find a better letter to a customer than the one which closes this bulletin—by Mrs. Margaret Sayles of the Kansas City branch.

*Ten Steps to a Quality Performance.* This bulletin is full to the brim with sales psychology. Note the eighth step: "Stress the things you *can do* for the reader—not the things you *can't do*. Remember the tenth step: "A good letter makes the customer *want to do* as you suggest, and then makes it *easy* for him to do it.

*Don'ts for Ward Letter Writers.* These 37 "don'ts" apply to any company. In the two pages of the bulletin, Mr. Roy has presented a book on letter writing.



*Ward's Policy! What Does it Mean?* Of particular interest in this bulletin is the attached drawing, and the credit given to both student and instructor. Here we have a secret in good bulletin writing. Use names. Give recognition to those who do quality work.

## 6. Other Devices to Improve Letters

*Contests based on company letters.* Probably more so than any other nation, the people of America love competitive sports. This



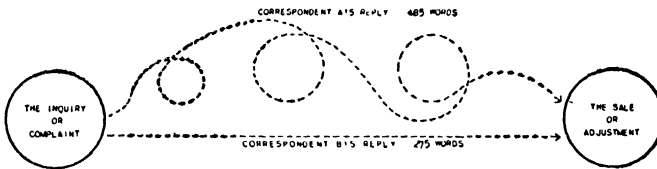
# Better Letters

... AN OCCASIONAL BULLETIN  
DEVOTED TO THE IMPROVEMENT  
OF OUR CUSTOMER RELATIONS

MONTGOMERY WARD

BULLETIN NO. 15

### THE ROUTES OF TWO CORRESPONDENTS



"Stick to your subject and don't wander from it" is a good slogan to follow. Just remember a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, and a letter shorn of all unnecessary verbiage is the quickest and safest way to make a sale or complete an adjustment.

Evidently correspondent "A" had not read the customer's letter when he started to dictate. He talks in circles - he repeats - he gets entirely off the subject, and then jumps back again to about where he started. His letter is costly - it lacks sequence and seldom accomplishes its purpose.

It's a different story with correspondent "B." He has studied his case and has thought out his letter before he started to dictate. There is no lost motion - his letter is clear, forceful and to the point. He doesn't guess - he knows what he wants to say - says it - and stops. He believes in simple direct statements written in a friendly, courteous way. He is a genius in his line - he is a Master Letter Writer.

*F. N. Roy*

Correspondence Supervisor





# Better Letters

... AN OCCASIONAL BULLETIN  
DEVOTED TO THE IMPROVEMENT  
OF OUR CUSTOMER RELATIONS

MONTGOMERY WARD

BULLETIN NO. 41

## LETTER WRITING FROM A TO Z

- ATTENTION:** The first duty of every letter is to attract attention or it is only so much waste paper. See that your letter opens with something that will catch the reader's eye - that will get him to read on until your message is delivered.
- BUSINESS:** "Business is sensitive. It goes only where it is invited and stays only where it is well treated." (Author unknown.)
- CLEARNESS:** Write your letters in A B C language so that a twelve year old child will get the meaning. Our letter must be understood if it is to accomplish its purpose.
- DIRECTNESS:** A straight line, you know, is the shortest distance between two points. Stick to your story--don't wander away and expect your reader to follow you. He may not do it.
- EASY TO READ:** Make your letter easy to read by using short sentences and short paragraphs. Simple, accurate words and enough of them - not too many - make a letter easy to understand.
- FRIENDLINESS:** Cultivate writing a friendly letter. Don't be afraid to smile at the people to whom you write letters - they like it.
- GENEROSITY:** A good letter writer is one who is generous - who has a far seeing vision - one who expects to give as well as take - one who knows that sometimes it pays better to spend \$2.00 to adjust a \$1.00 complaint than it does to antagonize the customer with long-winded arguments.
- HUMANNESS:** Be human. Make your letter shake hands with the reader. Put yourself in his place - talk his language - don't try to be clever - warm up to your reader and he will warm up to you. Be your real self.
- INFLUENCE:** To influence people, appeal to their wants. Remember the only way to get them to do a thing is to make them want to do it.
- JUSTICE:** Wards have always been open minded and fair to their customers. Make them feel that our guarantee means what it says and no undue advantage will be taken of them.
- KNOWLEDGE:** Know what you are talking about. Sell yourself on the article if you are to sell the other fellow. Know the selling points you should use to convince your reader. The things that convince you should convince him.

will to beat the other fellow can be made a powerful asset in a better-letter program by staging contests to see which dictator can excel the rest in solving a correspondence problem. The best results are obtained when actual situations taken from the company's experience are used to test the writers' skill. It may be a letter of complaint received from a customer, an attempt on the part of another to deduct an unearned discount, or any other real letter-problem which somebody in the company had to handle.



- 2 -

<b>LETTERS:</b>	You can make every letter you write a sales letter, regardless of its nature. Convincing the reader that he should do what you ask; is a sales letter whether written in the Sales, Adjustment, Collection, or any other Department.
<b>MESSAGE:</b>	Tell your story so that even a child can understand it without any possible chance of misinterpretation or lack of understanding.
<b>NEGATIVE:</b>	Negative thought gives the reader the opposite meaning to that which the writer is trying to convey. Instead of indicating something that is detrimental to our best interests, revise the sentences that are negative or misleading and make them positive. Sales are made by positive, not negative statements.
<b>OVERSIGHT:</b>	Do not overlook anything that requires an answer no matter how small it may seem to you. This will take a little longer, but the results in Good Will and extra business are sure to be worth the time and effort.
<b>PARAGRAPH:</b>	Paragraph often. The paragraph is designed to make the task of reading easier by affording resting places for the eye and mind. It should contain a central idea, and the details that help to develop the idea.
<b>QUALITY:</b>	Quality is always of first consideration. The quality should go in the letter before Words name goes on the bottom, because the letter is a success only if it accomplishes its purpose.
<b>RESOURCEFULNESS:</b>	Try to use original thoughts in at least a part of your letter. Don't be a "copy cat" if time will permit you to think out a letter.
<b>STOP:</b>	Say it and stop! Words customers will pay more attention to a brief, snappy letter that conveys its meaning in clear, easily understood language than they will to a long-winded one that circles around and repeats the same thoughts over and over.
<b>TACT:</b>	Tact is that intangible something that never offends, never excites jealousy, never provokes rivalry, never treads upon other people's toes. Nothing can take the place of tact. It is the shrewd correspondent's most powerful weapon.
<b>Us:</b>	The "we," "our," and "us" habit is used to excess by some dictators. As a rule, the reader is not interested in us or our opinion. He wants facts, proof that the article is what he needs and is worth what we are asking for it.
<b>VERACITY</b>	Stick to the truth. If the facts about our merchandise won't sell it, the sale better not be made. Overselling is poor strategy. It is worse than not making the sale because it means that either the merchandise will come back or we will have a dissatisfied customer if he keeps it.
<b>WORDS:</b>	Words are the symbols of ideas. They are the medium for exchanging thoughts. But a word may not always give the reader the idea intended and the writer should make sure his meaning is understood.

The procedure is simple. A carbon copy of the letter which had to be answered, the more recent the better, is given to every dictator—or printed in the company bulletin. All who write letters may be requested to dictate their idea of a reply, or volunteers may be called. The weakness of the voluntary alternative is that only the better letter writers are likely to try their hands at the problem, and thus those who need the practice most are self-eliminated.

Of course a time limit is set for the replies to be returned to a



## COMPANY BETTER LETTER PROGRAM

certain party --the correspondence supervisor if there is one, or to anyone else who is directing the better letter program. The ideal plan is to code the replies in some way so that the identity of the contestants is not revealed until after the prize-winner has been selected. The person heading the program may do the judging, or he may ask some outsider who is an expert in business-letter-writing to serve in that capacity. In companies that have these contests, first, second, and third selections are usually made.

- 3 -

- XCEL** Let's make Ward's letters excel all others by being friendly, courteous and sincere. Give the customer the information he wants, in language he understands, and you have gone a long way not only in getting his order, but holding his future business.
- YES** Cultivate the "you" habit in your letters, which means writing from the reader's viewpoint. Your personal opinion means little unless you convince the reader what you are offering will benefit him.
- ZEALOUS** The zealous Ward correspondent is bound to reap a harvest in converting inquiries into sales, and disgruntled customers into satisfied ones.

\*\*\*\*\*

Perhaps you have heard the story about Mose, the old negro, who walked into a drug store to use the telephone.

"Hello, is dat you, Mr. Jones?-----I see youah ad for a man in de papah two weeks ago.-----I need-----Is you satisfied with the man you got?-----You feller ----All right, thank you, Sir."

"It's too bad someone has the job," the druggist said to Mose.

"Dat's all right, Boss. You see, I'se de man what got the job two weeks ago an' was just checkin' up on myself."

Mose had an eye for business. It pays to check ourselves once in a while.



Correspondence Supervisor



The reward for winning need not be anything of great value—perhaps a new hat, a fountain pen, or a good new book on letter writing. Cash prizes are not considered advisable, since the competition may become too bitter and losers may not accept their defeat gracefully. The highest reward for human achievement is not material. People will try just as hard for the honor of being first as for some gadget that may go with it. The important thing to remember, however, is that each winner in a contest should be



## Better Letters

... AN OCCASIONAL BULLETIN  
DEVOTED TO THE IMPROVEMENT  
OF OUR CUSTOMER RELATIONS

MONTGOMERY WARD

BULLETIN NO 42

### PERSONALIZE YOUR LETTERS

One of our correspondents asked me the other day, "Just what do you mean by personalizing a letter? It never has been quite clear to me."

This young fellow had looked in the dictionary, but he didn't find a satisfactory definition. He wanted something that applied strictly to letters - not a general term that he had to mull over in his mind before he started to dictate.

Perhaps you have thought of a better definition than I am giving in this bulletin, but simply speaking, isn't a personalized letter just a personal letter written from the reader's viewpoint - a "from me to you" letter that applies to the customer's particular case? I don't believe it is so hard to write, either, if you simply pretend you are in the other man's place. Then you would be quite sure to write about the things that would benefit him.

If this is true, and I don't believe anybody doubts it, the quickest way to reach your customer or your prospect is to talk about the things that are of interest to him. Make this interest the target - the bull's-eye at which you shoot. Start out early in your letter talking about him and his affairs, his interest, and his business.

Usually your reader perks up the minute you say something that will help him in his work, give him prestige or benefit him in some way. Make his wants and his welfare the theme of your letter. If you can prove that what you are offering will help him, you need only make it possible for him to act, and the job is done. Adopt the "nothing-is-too-much-trouble" attitude and make him feel that his satisfaction and good will are most important to you and then you will have a personalized letter to the Nth degree.

And the more you know about your reader, the easier it will be to personalize your letter. Capitalize on any cue he gives you. If you know of some particular use he is going to make of the merchandise and can elaborate on it, so much the better. Often you can get into his good graces by letting him know you are familiar with his problem and are anxious to help.

**TALK HIS LANGUAGE.** You may have heard the story of the city man who was down South and undertook to drive a team of somewhat balky mules. He drove them to a nice shady spot in the road, and they stopped and refused to move. He used moral persuasion and other methods without effect.

Just then an old darky happened along. "Boss," he said, "does you-all want them mules to go rum heah?"



- 2 -

Being told that was the idea, the old dorky climbed up on the seat and proceeded to tell those mules a few pertinent things - and they ambled off. "Now, why wouldn't they go for me?" said the puzzled city man. "Boss," said Mose, "You-all don't talk their language."

Sometimes I am afraid we do not understand or take advantage of all the information the customer gives us. Read the letter you are answering carefully - tell him what he wants to know and add any other points you think will help him in making a decision. Just remember that "selling is the job of making the prospect understand his need for what you have to sell."

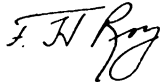
In other words, salesmanship is the job of helping the prospect buy by creating in his mind an appreciation of what benefits or advantages he will get from whatever it is you are selling, and of making him realize that the advantages he will get are worth the price you are quoting.

So much for a personalized sales letter. But don't these principles also apply to any business letter? An adjustment or a credit letter is also a sales letter because you are trying to sell the reader on what you are offering. Again you put yourself in the other man's place and write as nearly as you can from his viewpoint, keeping in mind the fairness of your offer and the policy of the company you represent.

It should always be borne in mind that few people are wilfully dishonest, but frequently there is a difference of opinion. When two honest people disagree, one must be wrong although he may be just as strong in his belief or conviction that he is right as you are that he is wrong. Your job then is to tactfully explain why you cannot do as he suggests, and if you are both fair, and you put up the right argument, he will see your reasoning and agree with you.

So don't forget the "YOU" angle. Be considerate; be natural and friendly. The next letter you write may be just another letter to you, but it is important to the fellow that gets it. He is probably watching for your reply. Now your letter strikes him and what mood it places him in are mighty important to you and to Montgomery Ward.

The attached case handled by Mrs. Margaret Sayles of the Kansas City Mail Order House is an excellent example of a personalized letter. Mrs. Sayles couldn't write this type of letter if she wasn't intensely interested in her work and in Ward's customers.



Correspondence Supervisor

publicly praised. It may be announced in another bulletin, at a meeting of the letter-class, or at some company function.

If the company has some kind of a school, with one or more classes in letter writing, a sequence of problems may be used, a new one assigned at each weekly meeting, and the winner of the previous contest announced.

Better-letter contests, as briefly outlined above, serve at least three beneficial purposes: (1) since the letters to be answered are taken from all parts of the business, they give each contestant a



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## CUSTOMER'S LETTER

Dear Manager:

I want to thank you for your kind letter and your offer to take care of my order specially. You see it is dreadfully important that we get just the right doll. Our little girl had an operation this summer and while she was in the hospital she wrote for Santa Claus letter and she has planned for this doll ever since June.

Santa has never disappointed her in all her life yet; and so we can see I was up against a pretty hard proposition to find a large doll with the necessary requirements.

You will have my undying gratitude if you can just send this particular doll with golden hair and brown eyes.

I am also going to leave the rest of my order with you and I hope you will not think I am imposing on your lovely kindness, but I would like them to come together. I really cannot thank you with mere words but I want you to know I am sincerely grateful.

Yours very truly,

Mrs. A. B. Chapman

P.S. Your Xmas Catalog is almost too tempting - I could scarcely decide.

\* \* \* \* \*

OUR REPLY

Dear Mrs. Chapman:

I'm mighty glad to tell you Santa won't disappoint your little girl, this time, for I had your brown-eyed blond doll mailed yesterday. She is a little beauty and will bring a lot of joy to your home, I'm sure.

It was nice of you to explain just how much this doll means to you and I have found a real pleasure in getting it for you. Of course, we also shipped the little sewing machine and here is the billing of the order.

And now, Mrs. Chapman, I want to take this opportunity to offer you and your family my Best Wishes for a Very Merry Christmas and a New Year of Health and Happiness.

Enc. Billing

-----, Manager  
Kansas City House

04490

better idea of what goes on outside of his own department; (2) by co-ordinating training with the deep-seated thirst for competition, contests tend to make the former more interesting; and (3) they encourage the best kind of practice in letter writing, since each assignment represents an actual company experience.

Perhaps a fourth benefit that should have been mentioned is that often in the contests some hitherto unrecognized writer of ability comes to the front. The executives thus discover an asset in their personnel which later may be required to solve a manpower need.



*Correspondence manuals.* Another helpful instrument in maintaining a high standard of correspondence, and for use as a reference guide, is the manual of information prepared by some companies for their dictators and typists. Since these manuals are assembled independently and slanted at the needs of the particular company, no two of them are ever found to be alike. Every executive in charge of correspondence has his own preferences with respect to letter mechanics, and the manual which he puts together is sure to



## Better Letters

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MONTGOMERY WARD

BULLETIN NO. 14

### TEN STEPS TO A QUALITY PERFORMANCE

#### 1. BE FRIENDLY

Perhaps this is the most important point in the writing of Ward letters. How can we make an impression on the reader if we irritate him instead of getting him in a friendly frame of mind to listen to our story? The friendly letter never gets a file heading. It disarms the customer and makes him forget his grievance or complaint.

#### 2. KNOW YOUR MERCHANDISE

Don't attempt to answer a letter unless you are familiar with all the facts that you can write intelligently. How can you expect to sell goods or attract a complaint if your reader knows more about the merchandise than you do? If you are selling Underwood typewriters, find out all you can about the Underwood and also the other makes so that if any questions are asked you can give an answer. Or if you are selling washing machines, be familiar with all kinds. Post yourself thoroughly on the merchandise about which you are writing.

#### 3. MAKE YOURSELF CLEAR

Study your customer so that you can write as nearly as possible in his own language. You can explain the most complicated thing to a washwoman or day laborer if you have your subject well in hand and use simple, everyday language. Don't high-hat your customer with high-brow ideas and think you can put them over. You can't.

#### 4. DON'T ARGUE WITH YOUR READER

Keep this thought in mind that when you win an argument you usually lose a customer. You can't force your reader to agree with you, but if you can suggest a better way, nine times out of ten he will listen to you. Arguments invariably result in irritation - not conviction.

#### 5. BE TRUTHFUL

Wards will not permit untrue statements in our letters or in our catalogs. It is perhaps better to undersell than oversell, but either is bad practice. The facts will sell our merchandise if presented in the right way, so don't promise anything you can't do or live up to. Be honest with yourself and with your reader.

(Over)



differ from the one in use in the company across the street. Generally, the contents include sample letters to show the typist the forms she is expected to follow, information with respect to titles, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviation, and such other matters as the compiler may consider important. Perhaps the biggest value of the manual is that it assures consistency, so that all letters mailed from the company are similar in appearance and form.

The manual is usually prepared only in the larger companies

- 2 -

6. BE ENTHUSIASTIC

One writer says. "Enthusiasm is to a man what steam is to an engine. It's the driving power - the incentive to play the game - the Alpha and Omega of everything that puts snap and charm and life into our work."

7. SHOW CONSIDERATION

Be considerate in handling every complaint or inquiry, large or small, and particularly with customers who are impatient or dissatisfied. Pointing out the customer's weaknesses or faults may lose the order and it won't help in making the adjustment. Remember the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

8. BE POSITIVE

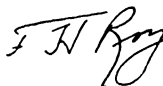
In both Sales and Adjustments work, stress the things you can do for the reader - not the things you can't do. Lead him, but do not drive or force him to agree with you. Nearly all customers are willing to be shown, but you can't use strong arm methods or force the issue even though you know you are right.

9. BE HELPFUL

Always suggest an article that will answer the customer's needs. Help him in his selection, but only if the article will benefit him. And nothing will kill sales chances for future business quicker than an indifferent, lazy attitude in handling complaints. The customer is looking for help and advice and it is your job to give it to him

10. MAKE EVERY LETTER SELL

Make every letter sell something - merchandise or good will. Make it friendly, sincere, clear and helpful. Don't leave your reader out on a limb so he doesn't know what action to take. A good letter paves the way to a successful conclusion. It makes your customer want to do as you suggest and then makes it easy for him to do it.



Correspondence Supervisor





# Better Letters

... AN OCCASIONAL BULLETIN  
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OF OUR CUSTOMER RELATIONS

MONTGOMERY WARD

BULLETIN NO. 47

## DON'TS FOR WARD LETTER WRITERS

Don't! Not a very good word as good words go - is it?

Yet, it has its place. I know that this word was used plenty of times when I was a boy. And if the truth were known, probably there are still a good many don'ts left in the world that would not be out of place where most of us hang our hats.

True, it may seem negative - sort of left-handed, in a way. But is there any other word that expresses the thought, and gives it the emphasis it deserves? I hardly believe there is.

And there are many times when "don't" would save us a lot of trouble and inconvenience. Here are a few "don'ts" that we could well afford to keep in mind in writing letters.

- DON'T start to dictate unless you have all the information.
- DON'T speak in general terms. Be specific.
- DON'T exaggerate or boast, and don't oversell. If the truth won't sell our merchandise, we had better lose the sale.
- DON'T make misstatements. Remember, you are representing Montgomery Ward and you can undo years of fair dealing.
- DON'T compel a customer to read through your letter before he gets the information he asked for.
- DON'T be too wordy. Eliminate the obvious. A letter should be long enough, but not too long.
- DON'T repeat. (Occasionally it is permissible for emphasis.)
- DON'T sacrifice clearness for brevity. Little words like A, AN, THE, and so forth are in the language for a purpose.
- DON'T use heavy words. One syllable words are clearer and more effective. The more of them you use, the better your letter is liked.
- DON'T use wornout, meaningless expressions commonly labeled "Business Lingo."
- DON'T write anything you have reason to question. It is your letter and you are responsible for it.
- DON'T be a robot - don't copy someone else - be your real self. Make your letter sparkle - keep it alive.
- DON'T ramble. Don't use long paragraphs. Keep your letter in proper sequence.
- DON'T spoil an otherwise good letter with a poor opening or closing paragraph.
- DON'T say everything in one breath. Come up for air. Disregard of this caution causes clumsy sentences.
- DON'T be afraid of too many sentences. It is the long, clumsy one-sentence paragraph that bespeaks the amateur.
- DON'T become stereotyped. Versatility is a rare fault.
- DON'T say anything that does not add to the clearness of the letter. Simplicity initiates courtesy and personality.
- DON'T say anything that hinders or that may prevent you from making the sale or the adjustment.

(Over)

where many letters are written, and where some one person devotes his full time to the keeping of correspondence on a high level. Unfortunately, however, some of the manuals now in use do not reflect modern letter principles, and many of the rules they set forth are those of the hide-bound past. In some cases this may be because they have been in existence a long time and never revised; in others, it simply means that they have been prepared by individuals not familiar with modern letter practice.



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DON'T gush, but DON'T overlook a personal reference that the customer's letter may invite. It pays.

DON'T stress complaints. It irritates instead of soothes.

DON'T express surprise, loss to understand, or disappointment. It is better to tell the customer what you are doing to help.

DON'T express regret more than once in a letter.

DON'T suggest that the mistake was caused by carelessness, negligence, or unbusiness-like methods. Mistakes will happen, but they should not be a result of these things.

DON'T say that mistakes are apt or bound to happen, or in any other way suggest the "frequency of errors."

DON'T say "It will not happen again." This statement is exaggerated and probably untrue, for mistakes occur in every business.

DON'T suggest that the customer may be dissatisfied with Wards service or merchandise and stop buying.

DON'T be nasty in your letters. Firmness shows what you intend to do and commands respect.

DON'T turn down the customer in the first paragraph. Lead up to it with reasons.

DON'T use a sharp, superior or humble tone. Be natural.

DON'T forget that the customer is human like yourself.


DON'T be guilty of the following when making adjustments:

- Don't reveal your selfish motives in making the concession. Talk from the customer's point of view, not from ours.
- Don't make the concession grudgingly. You are granting the claim because the customer is entitled to it, and you want to create good will.
- Don't parade your generosity offensively, or try to make the customer feel you are doing him a favor. The self-respecting man does not like to accept a concession under such circumstances.
- Don't make insincere statements of special favors, such as "We are doing this as a special concession to you," or "We would not do this for anyone but you."
- Don't make an adjustment and intimate to the customer that he should not have it.

DON'T ever question a customer's integrity or good intentions.

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These are not all of the "Don'ts." But if you will keep the ones listed in mind, I am sure that every letter you write will be worthy of the character, reputation and tradition of Wards.



Correspondence Supervisor

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Correspondence manuals are also valuable in getting the newly hired typist or dictator quickly acclimated to company letter-practices. In this sense, they are time-savers and mistake-eliminators. They cannot, however, take the place of personal training; nor do they provide the challenge to better work which the novice gets from a well-directed letter program.

*Form letters and paragraphs.* A form letter is essentially no different from any other letter, except that it is mailed to more than



one person, with the name and address of each recipient filled in at the top. When the fill-in is a perfect match with the part already prepared, the average reader does not realize that the same letter has been sent to other people. Unfortunately, however, the "perfect match" is more of an exception than the general rule, and this is the great weakness of the device. When the reader knows that he is only one of many to get the letter, much of its power is lost, since the effect is no greater than getting a circular or some piece of advertising.



## Better Letters

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MONTGOMERY WARD

BULLETIN NO. 70

### WARDS POLICY! WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

A few days ago, a customer wrote us as follows:

I sent the carburetor back C.O.D. and I had a card from the post office that it was there. I paid for it C.O.D. when it came so I sent it back the same way. Please send to the post office for it at once.

Now, please read our reply:

We are sorry to hear of the trouble you have been having with the carburetor #261A3340 priced at \$9.95 that did not fit your car.

We sent the carburetor to you C.O.D. as that is the way you requested it sent. Our policy, however, does not allow us to accept C.O.D. packages so we cannot send for this order as you requested.

We suggest that you arrange with your postmaster to release this package and have it sent to us by regular mail enclosed with this letter and we will see that a refund is sent to you immediately.

"What is wrong with this letter?" you may ask. "It reads pretty good to me and is understandable. Surely it is plain every-day English, and what more can we tell the customer?"

But let's analyze this letter carefully. Students of letter writing probably would tell us that it is a "we," "our" and "us" letter written entirely from our viewpoint without regard to the customer's feelings. Such letters seldom, if ever, accomplish their purpose.

That is true, but the real fly in the ointment is the fact that the correspondent is using Wards policy as a shield for not doing as the customer asks without giving an explanation why it cannot be done. The customer is not interested in Wards Policy. She bought the carburetor on a C.O.D. basis and naturally she feels justified in returning it C.O.D., and when we write giving Wards Policy as an excuse for not accepting the shipment, she thinks we are unfair in asking her to do something that we ourselves will not do.

If the correspondent doesn't know why we cannot accept C.O.D. shipments, she should ask someone in the department who does know. They would gladly tell her and then she could write an intelligent letter that would put the customer in such frame of mind she would want to buy from us again.



Another weakness in the use of form letters is the failure to re-write them at regular intervals; result: they are no longer up-to-date, or they are mailed to the same individuals more than once. This, of course, creates a poor impression in the reader's mind, unless the purpose of the letter is purely routine, and the recipient does not care whether it is a form letter or not. For example, a form letter might be used to notify dealers that orders had been shipped. In this case, the only purpose of the message is to give the information.

- 2 -

Here is a letter that undoubtedly would make a better impression on the reader:

The carburetor was shipped C.O.D. because you will recall that was the way you requested us to send it.

You may be sure that had you returned the carburetor without the C.O.D. charges attached, you would have received your check promptly for its cost, plus the postage both ways. If we were to accept C.O.D. packages, it would force us to take in many things not yet paid for, or we would be receiving merchandise that does not belong to us.

With this explanation, you will see why we cannot accept C.O.D. packages, and will be glad to take this up with your postmaster and have him release the package. Then, please return this letter promptly and our check will be sent to you as soon as the carburetor is received.

The next time you use the expression "Ward's Policy," give it a little more thought. Like the patent medicine quack, with some correspondents, it is a sure cure for all the ills of the business if the patient isn't lost in the operation.

The letter we have reviewed today is quite typical of some we see every week. Often it is the small things in letters that cause annoyance and discontent. Remember that no business is any stronger than the public's opinion of it. We have, to a large degree, sold the public on the quality of our merchandise, but do we sometimes slip in telling our story well in our letters? Maybe we don't get down to earth and rub elbows enough with the common man. What do you think?

A letter, you know, may be kept as a permanent record for or against you. In conversation you may say something that you see was not taken in the right way, but you can put your hand on the listener's shoulder and say, "Wait a minute, Mr. So and So. I didn't mean to offend you," and he will see your smiling face and forgive you.

But after you have mailed a letter, you can't run after Uncle Sam and get it back. All alone, perhaps in his yard or in his home the next morning, your customer will open and read that letter and form an opinion of what you have said. It will be either a good opinion or a poor one. The verdict depends on what you say and how you say it. There are no second shots in letters.

*F. N. Roy*  
CORRESPONDENCE SUPERVISOR

The attached drawing is Miss Bertha Rhodes' impression of her first day in Portland's letter writing class. It speaks well for Mrs. Lillian Viken, the instructor, who has put her story across so well that it brought such a favorable response.



In spite of the fact that form letters are black sheep in the opinion of certain writers, and that some companies rarely use them, they do serve a useful purpose in business. If properly handled, there can be no logical objection to them; in fact, some form letters rate higher than those individually typed and dictated. The reason is that they are carefully tailored to fit certain situations, and often represent the best skill and thought available in the company. This is not likely to be true of the other letters, often dictated on the spur of the moment by various individuals of different abilities.

- 3 -

## YOUR LETTER IS YOUR MESSENGER

GIVE HIM  
GOOD FORMUSE GOOD  
MECHANICSCLOTHE  
HIM WELLWITH  
CLEARNESS  
CONCISENESS  
COMPLETENESS

FRILLS ARE OLD — FASHIONED



LEAVE OFF THE TAIL — ENDERS

HOPING TO BE OF SERVICE SOON  
HOPING TO HEAR FROM YOU OFTEN  
TRUSTING THIS WILL BE SATISFACTORY



Another advantage of interest to the average business executive, is the immense saving in time and money. In an hour or two, numerous copies of the form letter can be processed by mimeograph, multigraph, or automatic typewriters, and the time spent in placing the names and addresses on them is only a fraction of what it would have been to type them individually. Furthermore, an even greater saving is the time it would have taken to dictate the letters personally. This time saving not only leaves the typists and dictators free to do other work, but it represents a considerable reduction in cost—a fact no company can very well afford to disregard. What this reduction represents in actual money is difficult to estimate, since the possibilities in one organization for the use of form letters, and the nature of their content, may differ widely from those in another. However, it is safe to say that the average form letter costs, to prepare and mail, no more than one fourth of what the same letter would cost if individually dictated and typed.

Except in a general way, it is difficult to state the uses of the form letter. They are quite satisfactory for repetitive and routine situations where no attempt is being made to slant the message at a particular reader. On the other hand, when the purpose is more important, or involves special circumstances, the use of a form letter cannot be approved. For sales letters, the form letter gets the green light only when it is necessary to contact a great many prospects quickly, and little is known of their individual characteristics or buying habits.

*Personalizing the form letter.* Since we know the importance of making the individual feel he is getting a special letter prepared for him and nobody else, it is plain that the form letter should be made to appear as if it were a personal message. Whether or not this object is ethical you may decide for yourself, but it may be justified on the ground that the reader would get the same message if it were individually dictated.

As we have pointed out, many of the form letters mailed in business would not fool a moron. The type of the name and address does not match the type of the body. The ink of the two parts is of different shades. The spacing and alignment are dead giveaways. Another fact to cause suspicion is the use of a salutation made to fit all those who are going to get the letter; the condition can easily be avoided by *not* including the salutation in the form part of the letter. Naturally, the letter is more likely to pass as personal if it starts "Dear Mr. Doe," than if it starts "Dear friend," or in some other general way.

To personalize the form letter, several simple steps may be taken. Why they are ignored is hard to say, because there is no logical rea-



son for handicapping a mailing any more than is necessary. You should, therefore, observe these steps:

1. Use a letterhead of good appearance, printed on paper of at least average quality—not a cheap substitute, poorly processed on thin paper, which any reader would know could not be the company's regular letterhead.
2. Use an envelope to match the paper. It will look better with the firm name neatly printed on it than blank.
3. Let the salutation be filled in by the typist, along with the name and address.
4. Insist that the fill-in be a perfect match with the rest of the letter. This means that the proper equipment must be provided, and that the work must be supervised.
5. See that the signature is personal, and affixed with ink. Processed signatures are easy to recognize. Never use a rubber stamp.
6. Mail the letter first-class. Seal it. Use regular postage stamps. This is not the cheapest method, but it is the best. Before you decide the cost is prohibitive, consider comparative results.

It will pay the company using many form letters to consider the purchase of automatic typewriters. One girl can easily manage a battery of four. After she types the names and addresses, and the salutations, the same machines will automatically complete the letters. A perfect match is then absolutely assured.

The use of automatic typewriters also makes further personalization possible. For example, the reader's name may be typed in the body of the letter. This takes more of the typist's time and adds to the expense, but the added touch of personalization may sometimes be more than worth the cost.

Do not turn a cold shoulder on form letters. Use them in their proper place, but use them *properly*. Make every one as much like an individually typed letter as is possible. Form letters serve a useful purpose, but keep them up-to-date. Change the copy at *regular* intervals, not just when you happen to think about doing it.

*A part of the letter program.* Since form letters are just as important as any others, assuring that they are doing the best possible job is a logical part of a company's better-letter program. In those cases where an outsider has been called in to start the program off, one of his chief duties is to examine the form letters currently in use, to suggest others that might be used, and to assist in such revisions as may be necessary.



The work does not stop with the departure of the expert, however, nor after the first house-cleaning is finished. At least four times a year the entire ensemble of form letters should be reviewed; most of them should be rewritten that often.

The fact that form letters are devised to take the place of personal dictation does not mean that, like a piece of machinery, they can be left alone until they wear out. A great many companies make the mistake of thinking of form letters as a necessary evil—paying little attention to them, even though they may be giving a lot of attention to the improvement of general correspondence. Form letters are not black sheep unless the company treats them as such. They deserve better consideration than they usually get.

### *7. Program of Peoples Gas Company*

*A typical example.* The experience of the Peoples Gas Company in Chicago well illustrates what happens when a better letter program is intelligently launched and persistently continued under thorough executive direction. The program has been selected as typical of the medium-sized company because it touched about fifty dictators in the Customers' Department, the channel through which most of the company's letter contacts flow. Of course, a long and honored list of other companies equally successful with their letter programs could be cited—the Jewel Tea Company, the American Rolling Mills, the Gates Rubber Company, Montgomery Ward, Monarch Life Insurance Company, and many, many others.

Some eight or nine years ago, the executives in charge of customer relations decided that something should be done to improve the letters in the Customers' Department. In this objective, they were heartily joined by the head of the department, Mr. Charles L. Sullivan. With no one in the company ready for the responsibility of leading the program, it was decided to look outside for competent help.

Here the company faced its first problem. Where would they find the help needed? This problem was solved in a way which other companies could well afford to copy. At that time in Chicago, there were several business-letter classes in operation for business men and others, all with flexible entrance qualifications. Accordingly, several members of the Customers' Department were enrolled at each of the universities and colleges where the courses in letter writing were offered. The company paid the tuition, but made it plain that the employees selected were expected to attend regularly and get the most possible out of the instruction.

At the end of the semester, the company representatives were



called together and notes compared; the object was to decide which of the college instructors might be best fitted to head a course within the company. The identity of the man finally selected is beside the point, but he was invited to take on the program, and accepted. It is significant to note, however, that he was a business man as well as a teacher, and was thus well qualified to approach their correspondence problems from the practical business viewpoint. Also, as it developed later, he had conducted similar letter programs for other companies.

*The program gets underway.* With the program leader chosen, a two-hour period was set aside each week—from three until five o'clock each Friday—for group lectures and discussion. These meetings, started eight years ago, are *still continued* with the exception of a recess during the three hottest summer months. The present leader is an employee who took the first course at one of the universities, and who turned out to have the necessary ability to keep the program going.

From the beginning, the letters actually written in the Customers' Department were used as case material for the course. The first round of meetings consisted of lectures on letter-writing principles, always slanted at Peoples Gas Company problems, plus discussion of carbon copies of letters written the previous week. At the end of each meeting, the instructor was given a new batch of these carbon copies so that he would be ready to discuss them at the next meeting.

It was made plain to those in the group that no punches would be pulled in the criticism of the carbon copies. When a letter was placed under the microscope, the name of the writer was mentioned and the class was allowed to enjoy any boners that he had made. Since the mistakes were common to all, the frankness of the criticisms was accepted in good spirit, because the group was proud that they "could take it."

To give the members of the class special practice, certain customer letters which were in the nature of problems were used as assignments. Each week, one of them was duplicated so that all the members of the class could have copies. Then each was asked to try his skill in dictating the reply best calculated to please the customer and at the same time conform to company policy and practice. At the next meeting, these replies were read by the program leader and the best three announced. Thus, the spirit of competition was kindled, and it contributed much to the success of the course.

During the first year and faithfully ever since, both Mr. Sullivan



and the officials responsible for the program were frequent visitors at the meetings. Their presence helped to establish the fact that the work was considered worth while, and to spur the "students" to maximum effort. No one ever knew when one of these executives would appear, and no one wanted to be caught unaware with a poor class presentation.

*Continuation of the work.* By the end of the first year there was no doubt about the value of the letter program. The improvement in dictation was marked. Complaints from customers were not nearly as numerous. A large file of complimentary letters from customers was accumulating. Many of them took the trouble to *thank* members of the class for the letters they had received. Not a single person in the group was doing a poor letter job, although some of them had not even completed their four years in high school. There were fewer people in the department, as no one who left had been replaced; better letters had reduced the number of complaints even though the number of customers was increasing.

With these results in the bag, most companies would have dropped the letter program, but Mr. Sullivan and his associates understood what would happen if the effort was terminated. They did not want to lose an inch of the ground already captured. It was decided that at least the weekly meetings must continue—and they have, during all of the eight years since the initial steps to improve correspondence were taken. The original instructor had built the foundation. The dictators *knew* the principles, but only by regular inspection of carbon copies could it be assured that those principles were still being followed.

Accordingly, once every week representative letters are examined. Then they are talked about in the Friday afternoon meetings. Bulletins have seldom been used in the program because the meetings have accomplished the purpose, and in a better way. Mr. Sullivan occasionally passes to his group a clipping about letters or some enthusiastic reply from a customer, but the dictators in this department need little inspiration. They are proud of their work and eager to win the praise which is never missing when an especially potent letter has produced favorable comment.

Over such a long period of time there has been some changing of faces, especially during the war years. Though the total number in the department is still considerably less than eight years ago, a small group eventually developed which had not had the benefit of the early lectures on letter-writing principles. The initial course was therefore repeated about a year ago—for a class made up only of the newcomers and this procedure will be resumed if and when



more novices appear. No one can hold a job in the department unless he has the distinction of being a first-class, expertly trained, letter writer.

The program of this company, as you may have noted, has been marked by simplicity, good leadership, and *persistence*. It could easily be copied by any other organization with a total of from 25 to 50 dictators. Compared to the results accomplished, it has cost the company very little; the executives consider it an investment rather than an expense.

Perhaps, above any other factor in the success of the program, has been the decision of the department's head that the weekly meetings and the analysis of the carbon copies must *continue*. The results speak for themselves. We know of no company where better letters are consistently written than in the Customers' Department of the Peoples Gas Company.

### *8. Showing Dictators How to Dictate*

*Necessary to the program.* A feature often overlooked in the letter program is the by-no-means-simple job of telling dictators how to dictate. The chief difficulty in the accomplishment is the fact that the person in charge is faced with as many personalities as there are individuals to train. Each has his own dictating habits, and each is ready to defend them to his last breath.

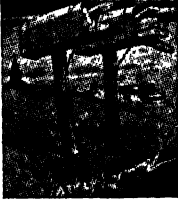
It requires no little tact to tell one dictator that he talks so loud he disturbs everybody else in the office; another, that he would enunciate more clearly if he didn't chew gum; a third, that he talks so fast the devil himself couldn't follow him on the cylinder. You probably have some of these problem dictators in your own office, and you also know how keenly they resent any insinuation that their cylinders are not popular in the transcription department.

The company which has an educational plan should offer a course in public speaking and demand that every dictator enroll. This no doubt would eliminate most of the sloppy enunciation which is a plague to the girls who have to transcribe cylinders. To be sure, the mumbling of words is only one of the faults that tend to contribute to incorrect transcription. Others are the failure to mark the dictation slip properly, to spell out unfamiliar names and terms, and to dictate punctuation marks.

To do this necessary training job, Montgomery Ward uses the following bulletin. While it talks about the Ediphone the points covered are just as applicable to the Dictaphone, or any other good dictating machine.



A BULLETIN THAT DOES THE JOB



# Better Letters

... AN OCCASIONAL BULLETIN  
DEVOTED TO THE IMPROVEMENT  
OF OUR CUSTOMER RELATIONS

MONTGOMERY WARD

BULLETIN NO. 82

MONTGOMERY WARD  
CHICAGO

December 1945

To Ward Dictators and Transcribers:

This manual is written to help improve relations with our customers through our written communications.

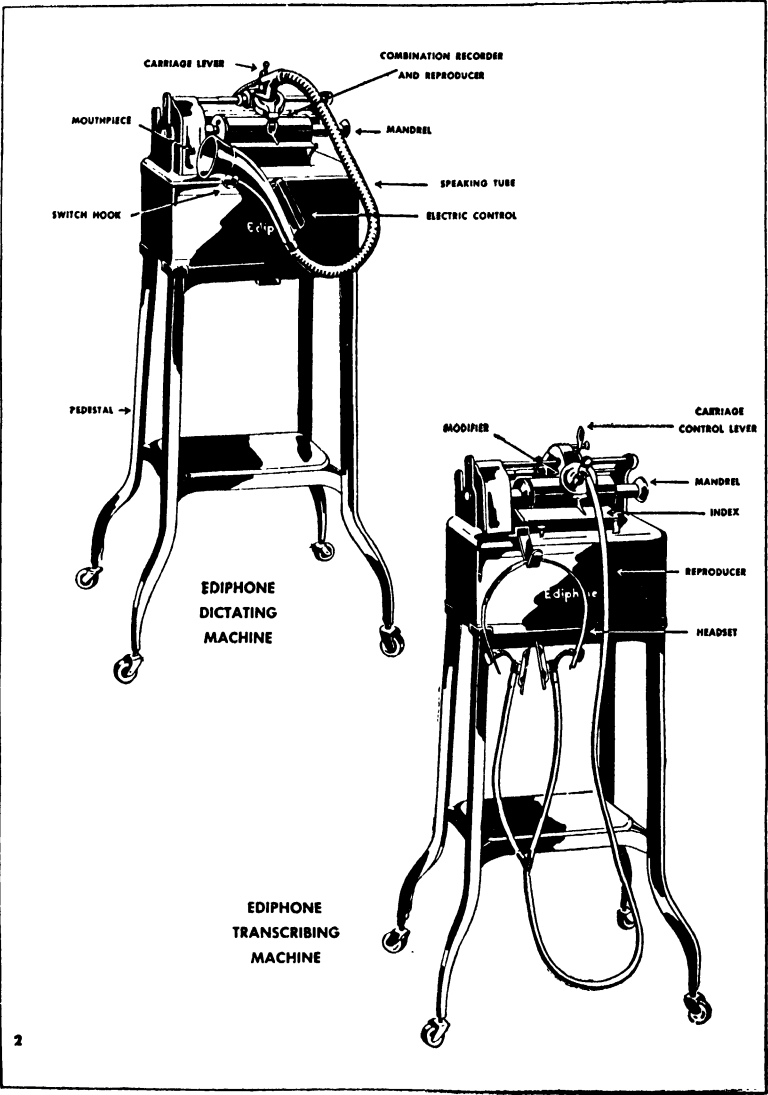
Few of our mail order customers ever meet a Ward representative. Their impression of the company is based entirely on our letters. That is why it is so important for us to write letters that are friendly, helpful, and ring true.

It takes a careful dictator and a conscientious transcriber to write a good letter. If either falls down on the job, the letter will not get the results intended.

We have divided this manual into two parts—one section for the dictator and one for the transcriber. As you sit down to your machine, each move you make is followed step by step. By reading both sections you will have a better understanding of your work and a knowledge of the importance of teamwork in letter writing.

*F. H. Roy*  
Correspondence Supervisor







### INSTRUCTIONS TO EDIPHONE DICTATORS

Whether you are a new dictator or have used the Ediphone for years, you will find this machine almost human in the way it responds to your every whim. It is the ideal way to handle dictation provided care is taken to see that what you say can be properly transcribed.

If your dictation is not clear so that it can be typed, the fault lies with you, with your Ediphone, or with the transcribing machine. It must be one of the three. If you are at fault, your letters probably are difficult to transcribe because you have ignored the instructions for dictating.

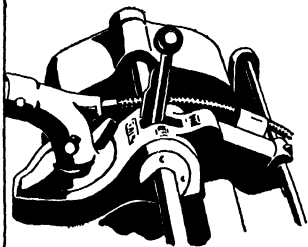
If you have never used the Ediphone, be sure to have some one show you its mechanical features. The machine is simple to operate, but until you use it and its operation becomes automatic, you may have difficulty.

No one can tell you how to dictate any more than he can tell you how to drive a car or ride a bicycle, but you will learn by experience. Let's review some of the mechanics of the operation and try to improve our dictation by putting them into practice.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE EDIPHONE

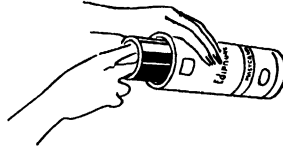
#### Before you start to dictate

1. Set the carriage lever in neutral (upright position) on the carriage; otherwise the cylinder won't go on.

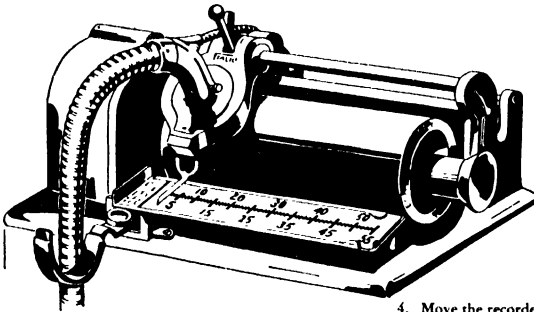
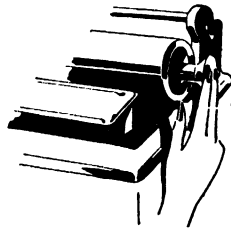




2. Remove cylinder from box with first two fingers of the right hand. This prevents marring the waxed surface.



3. Place cylinder on mandrel by pressing the mandrel knob so the cylinder slides all the way without being forced.



4. Move the recorder to the left on the carriage rod to the point on cylinder where you want to start dictating.

5. Pull carriage lever forward.
6. Pull forward the red button on switch hook to release the motor.



### To prepare chart for dictation

Insert box number, schedule, and your initials in upper right corner of chart. Put letters of the same schedule on one cylinder.

INSTRUCTIONS TO EDIPHONE OPERATOR	
Total	No. of letters
Box No.	386
Schedule	TUESDAY
Dict. By	LHE
(No Day Hour)	

### When you dictate

1. Do not smoke or chew gum.
2. Study carefully the letter you are answering so you will know what you want to say.
3. Press hand grasp of the electric control on the speaking tube. Let the cylinder revolve once or twice before starting to dictate and before stopping your Ediphone to make sure your opening and closing words are recorded.
4. Place the mouthpiece lightly against the upper lip and talk directly into the opening.
5. Enunciate clearly—do not mumble. Talk in a natural conversational tone.
6. Dictate evenly—not too fast—not too slow.
7. Spell out unfamiliar names and technical terms or write them on your chart or on a separate piece of paper.



**NOTE:** Spelling the name or word without an illustrating letter frequently is not sufficient because so many letters sound alike on the Ediphone, such as MN—SF—SD—PD, etc. Speed and easy understanding are promoted by always using the same word to illustrate a letter. Example: A as in Albany. The following list is recommended:

A—Albany  
B—Baltimore  
C—Chicago  
D—Denver  
E—Eddie

F—Frank  
G—George  
H—Henry  
I—Illinois  
J—John

K—Kansas  
L—Lincoln  
M—Mary  
N—Nancy  
O—Oakland

P—Portland  
Q—Queen  
R—Robert  
S—Samuel  
T—Texas

U—Union  
V—Victor  
W—William  
X—X-Ray  
Y—Young  
Z—Zero



## COMPANY BETTER LETTER PROGRAM

8. Indicate paragraphs and important punctuation.
9. Mark corrections on chart at point on scale where change is to be made so operator is warned in advance.
10. See that every word you dictate is on the cylinder.  
Don't expect your transcriber to fill in words that have not registered.

Lines for Corrections

Letter Number

Long

Short

Carbons

CORRECTION

11. Listen for the signal bell indicating your dictation is near the end of the cylinder.
12. Stop the cylinder by releasing the hand grasp on the electric control.

**After completing your letter**

Lines for Corrections

Letter Number

Long

Short

Carbons

Enclosures

Relief Size

Catalog Office

END OF LETTER

1. Draw a vertical line on chart from indicator where letter ends designating its length.
2. Number the correspondence you are answering.
3. Number the letters on chart to correspond with the number you have put on correspondence. Designate the kind of stationery, whether long or short letter, number of carbons and enclosures, if any

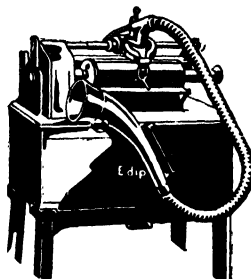
**To listen back**

1. Set the carriage lever at neutral position, moving recorder to selected point on cylinder.
2. Push lever back
3. Press electric control on speaking tube the same as when you dictate.



**When you are through dictating**

Hang the speaking tube on the switch hook. This shuts off the motor.

**To release the cylinder**

1. Place carriage lever in neutral (upright) position.
2. Press mandrel knob.
3. Push with thumb from left end.
4. Remove cylinder by inserting first two fingers of right hand in opening so as not to mar the surface.
5. Place cylinder in box with the printed end up.

**To complete the chart**

1. Show number of letters on cylinder in upper right corner.
2. Write on chart below scale "letter continued on cylinder (give number)" if part of letter is on another cylinder.
3. Indicate on chart any special information needed in transcribing your letter.
4. Roll chart the long way and insert with correspondence in cylinder so the box number is visible.

INSTRUCTIONS TO EDIPHONE OPERATOR	
Total No. of letters	7
Box No.	342
Sched. date	Tuesday





## COMPANY BETTER LETTER PROGRAM

SAMPLE CHART  
COMPLETELY FILLED IN

### At night

1. Push back the red button on stem of switch hook so motor won't run if speaking tube is accidentally knocked off hook.
2. Cover the machine.

### *Help your transcriber*

Make your dictation so clear and easy to transcribe that the operator will want to do your work. If the papers do not accompany your cylinder, dictate the name and address and also write it on the cylinder chart or on scratch paper. In calling the operator's attention to something on the cylinder, address her as "Operator, please do so and so." Then she will know it is not a part of the dictation.

To give you a better idea what this means, on the next page is a letter just as it was dictated and also the letter as it was actually transcribed. You will see that the dictator has taken a lot of pains to make things clear even to the spelling of simple words that might stump the operator.

Transcribers say this plan will help them do a better job of transcribing. If in doubt about any of these points, please discuss them with your supervisor or with your letter writing instructor. You want to be an A-1 dictator. Good dictation and good transcribing will make your work easier and more interesting, and you will also take pride in what you have accomplished. Remember teamwork can be just as effective in business correspondence as it is in combat and football.



The following letter illustrates some of the points suggested in this bulletin. The words in italics are instructions to the transcriber. The words which are not in italics are the ones to be transcribed

*Operator letter No. 1 is to Mr. W. L. Browne spell the name B-r-o-u-n-e* nine two two North Grove *spell G as in George-r-o-u-e* Avenue Oak Park Illinois Dear Mr. Browne I know your account is as Good as Gold *Operator quote and capitalize the G's in good and gold period end quote* I realize too that a charge of eight dollars fifty-three cents *Operator that is eight period five three* is small and in the press of other matters has probably been overlooked *period paragraph* If your account were the only small one on our books I would be happy to see that a reminder was sent not more than every month or two *period* But we have many small accounts and when they are not paid promptly their handling involves *Operator spell i-n-v-o-l-v-e-s* considerable expense *period paragraph* So won't you send your check today *period* Just clip it to the attached statement and mail it in the enclosed postpaid envelope *period* We will appreciate the courtesy *period Operator that is all.*

Mr. W. L. Browne  
922 N. Grove Ave.  
Oak Park, Ill.



Dear Mr. Browne:

I know your account is as "Good as Gold." I realize, too, that a charge of \$8.53 is small and in the press of other matters, has probably been overlooked.

If your account were the only small one on our books, I would be happy to see that a reminder was sent not more than every month or two. But we have many small accounts, and when they are not paid promptly, their handling involves considerable expense.

So, won't you send your check today. Just clip it to the attached statement and mail it in the enclosed postpaid envelope. We will appreciate the courtesy.

MONTGOMERY WARD

FHR:LHE  
Enc. Statement  
SE

Credit Department



### INSTRUCTIONS TO EDIPHONE TRANSCRIBERS

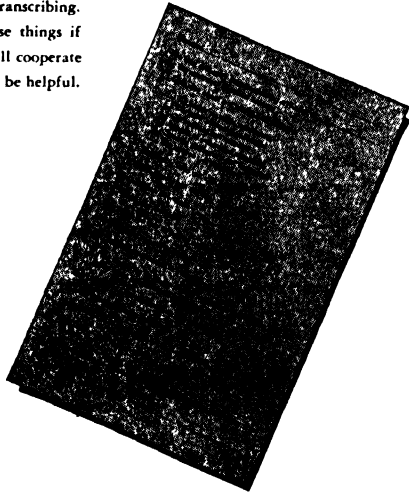
You are the key to the success or failure of our Ediphone dictation. On your shoulders rests the responsibility of putting on paper the message that goes to the customer and presenting it in such a way that it appeals to the reader.

A letter that is poorly written, regardless of its contents, will not be favorably received. It may be well dictated, but if you have done a poor job of transcribing, its effectiveness is lost.

The part you have in writing good letters cannot be overemphasized. You are intelligent and should question anything that, according to your judgment, seems incorrect. Even though you may occasionally be wrong in questioning what has been said, no harm is done if the dictator knows you are trying to make constructive suggestions. He will appreciate your cooperation.

You can help the dictator by pointing out some of the difficulties you have in transcribing. Dictators won't know about these things if you do not tell them, and they will cooperate when they know you are trying to be helpful.

**Use form 18939 in making  
your suggestions.**





Naturally the correspondent who dictated "Here is a machine that appeals to the masses and not just the few," was amused, but disappointed when his letter came back with this sentence reading: "Here is a machine that appeals to the matches and not just the fuel." The operator knew this didn't make sense, but she transcribed it without questioning the dictator as to its exact meaning.

To get at the root of our difficulties, let's review the procedure for transcribing.

### **Before you start to transcribe**

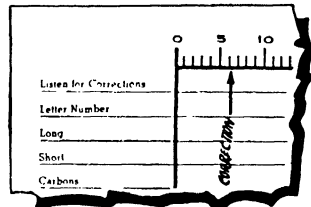
1. Remove headset from switch hook.
2. Pull forward red button on stem of switch hook to release the motor.
3. Adjust headset to comfortable position on head.
4. Raise reproducer head to permit placement of cylinder on mandrel.
5. Remove cylinder from carton by spreading slightly the first two fingers of the right hand and inserting in top of cylinder. This prevents marring the surface.
6. Slide cylinder on mandrel, printed end last, as far as it will go without force.
7. Press mandrel knob and with first two fingers of right hand push cylinder all the way to the left.
8. Move reproducer head to starting position as indicated on dictation chart.
9. Lower reproducer head.





### When you transcribe:

1. Check your correspondence so that each letter corresponds numerically with the letter on the chart.
2. Check your chart for the correct stationery and the number of carbons to be made.
3. Insert stationery in typewriter; set your margin correctly. Follow the instructions in the manual *Your Letters, Miss!*
4. Be sure the name on the correspondence tallies with the one mentioned by the dictator. If address is not given, it will be dictated.
5. Start transcribing machine with your left pedal. This pedal also is used to stop the machine. Use the right pedal (Repeater) for repeating.
6. Listen to the cylinder and adjust the screw under the Guide Chart of the transcribing machine to the speed most natural for you to transcribe.
7. Watch for corrections on the chart to avoid retyping.
8. Type what you hear unless your common sense tells you it is wrong, then call it to the dictator's attention.
9. Correct ungrammatical expressions when you are positive they are wrong, and call the dictator's attention to them.
10. Check the completed letter carefully. Be sure it is neat, type is clean and letter free of errors.



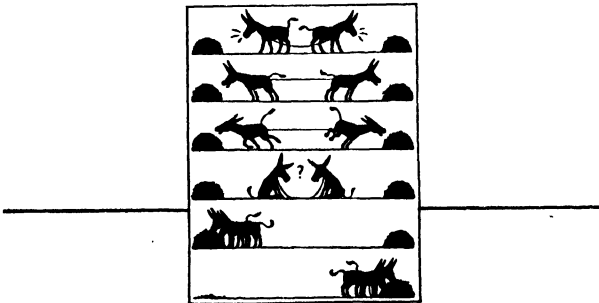


**To remove cylinder**

1. Raise reproducer.
2. Press mandrel knob.
3. Push with thumb from left end.

**At night**

1. Push back the red button on stem of switch hook so motor won't run if earphones are accidentally knocked off hook.
2. Cover both typewriter and transcribing machines.



Somebody may say, "Do I have to keep all of these things in mind? If I do, I won't get any work done." Naturally, they may slow up the work the first day or two, but through force of habit soon they will come to you automatically. Saving a single rewrite is worth much more than the effort it takes to put them into practice. "A stitch in time saves nine" is a good axiom for us to follow in transcribing as well as in dictating.



Although not all of our transcribers may understand football, the story of Knute Rockne's famous team of "Four Horsemen" and "Seven Mules" is worth repeating because it illustrates a point that we are trying to bring out in this bulletin. As the story goes—

"The 'Four Horsemen' or backfield of this well-known Notre Dame team once became chesty and took credit upon themselves for the team's success. Determined to teach his boys the lesson that it takes more than a backfield to make a football team, Rockne put in substitute linemen during a decisive game as replacements for the 'Seven Mules.'

"The tide turned. The opposing linemen immediately charged through Notre Dame's forward wall and upset the 'Four Horsemen' before they were fairly started. When the 'Mules' returned to the game, the 'Horsemen' once more started galloping. Not a word was spoken. But another lesson in teamwork had been ably demonstrated."

If the dictator and transcriber work together, it will help surmount many hurdles that are bound to come up almost daily. Are there any departments in the mail order house where cooperation is more important?

#### TEAMWORK

It ain't the goods or the money  
Or the funds that they can pay;  
But the close cooperation  
That makes 'em win the day.  
It ain't the individuals  
Or the Company as a whole  
But the over-all teamwork  
Of every bloomin' soul.

KIP LING







आवृत्ति सं० / Acc. No.

Please return this book on or before the  
date last stamped.

[illegible]



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